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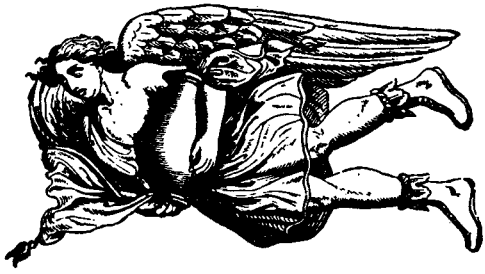

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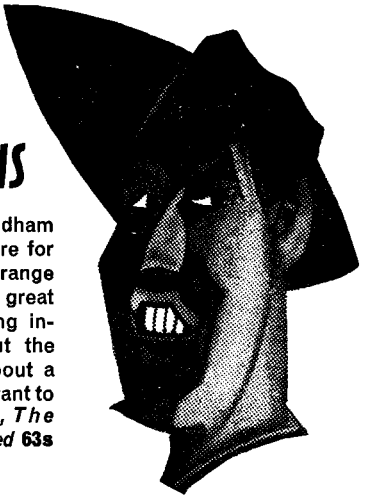

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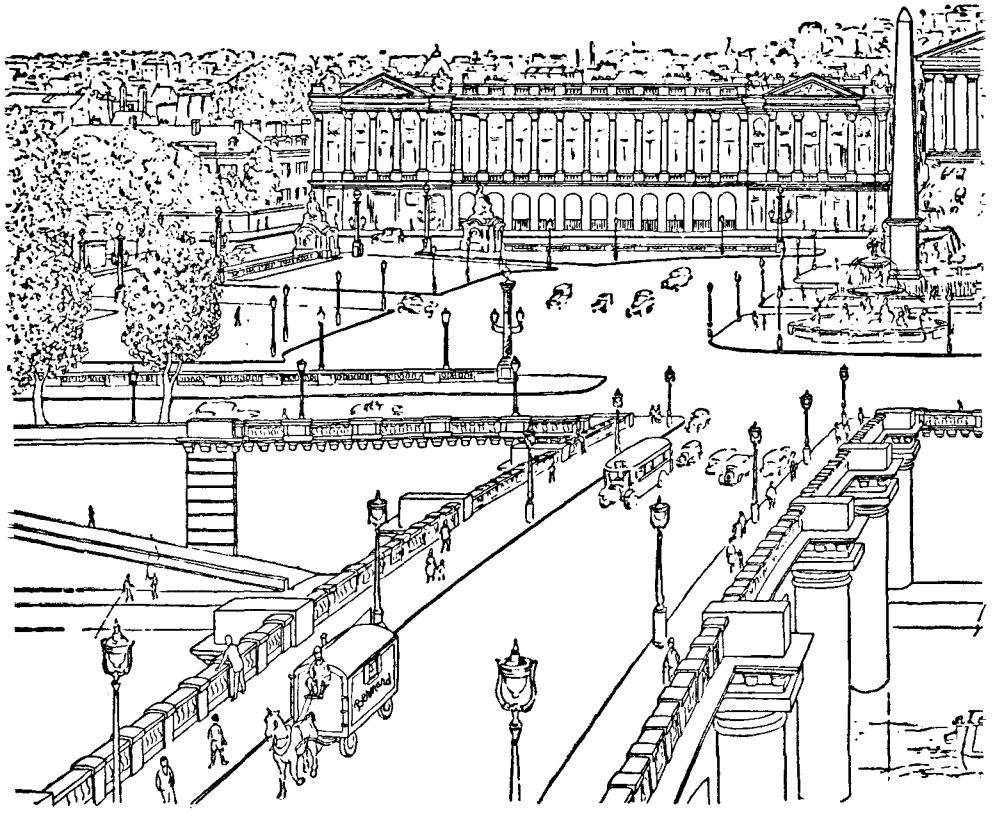

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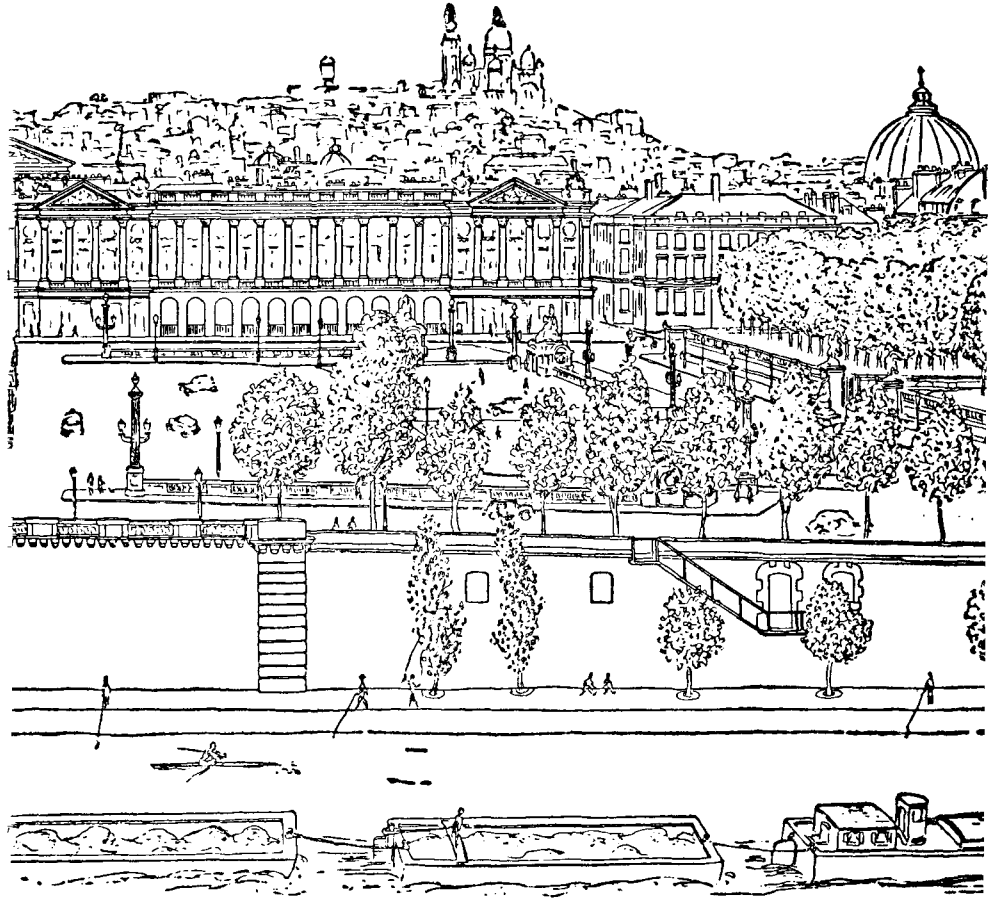

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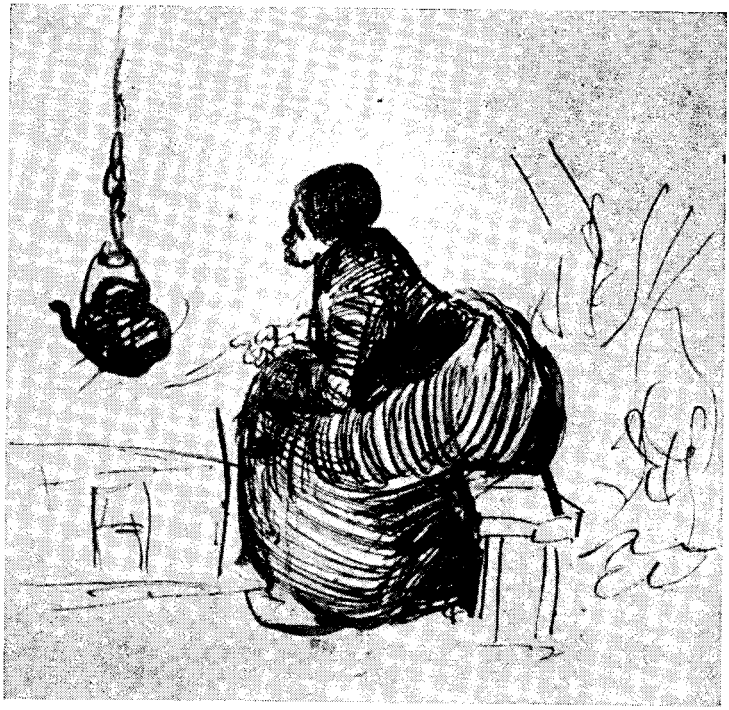

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VINCENT VAN GOGH THE BIG PICTURE

by John Mulligan

"I engage with the snark—every night after dark—
In a dreamy delirious fight;
I serve it with greens in those shadowy scenes,
And I use it for striking a light..."

The Hunting of the Snark

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Part One

THE TEE-OFF

MID-JULY 1955, 889 YEARS AFTER THE BATTLE OF Hastings, the townspeople of Auvers, a one-steepled, overgrown tarry town near Paris, woke up to a spanking, hand-lettered, red-white-and-blue poster festooned across the front of the café "A Van Gogh":

LA METRO GOLDWYN MAYER
Compagnie de Cinéma

invites all people who
desire to figure in the
scenes that she'll make

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 3
(all day before the townhall of Auvers)

to sign up as soon as
possible with Mr. Tagliana
café "A VAN GOGH"

men and lady figurants
will receive 1500F a day
children will receive 500F

Costumes shall be furnished by
M G M

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More ads came out in local papers offering 1000 francs apiece for live crows, and a few days later red arrows marked XXX appeared around town, one pointing into the schoolhouse, another pointing up to the 12th-13th-16th century church, another XXX pointing around the church, over the bluff and XXX across the wheatfields toward the little cemetery where Vincent van Gogh and his brother Théodore are buried.

Near the end of July farmers and kids were out catching crows with gluesticks, and on Friday, July 29, the MGM lion romped into town: camera trucks, generators, searchlights, cranes, wind machines, field offices, field kitchen, wardrobe trucks—more than 35 units. The villagers, with stools and sausages, gawked as the caravan XXX'd slowly down Avenue General de Gaulle and columned left into the playground of the schoolhouse next to the café.

Offices were set up in the schoolhouse and back room of the café, where an 1894 wind-up phone was put at Minnelli's disposal and a trunk line run in from Culver City, California. Kirk Douglas alighted from his shiny new trailer ($2,200) and rambled about town shaking off village curs and Art Buchwald of the New York Herald Tribune, European edition.

Cameras were set up in the café and Douglas made Coming Attraction "trailers" with an alleged Mlle. Ravoux, whose parents had owned the café when Mr van Gogh lived there. She had known Mr van Gogh when she was only so high; she and the other kids used to tag along when he painted in the nearby fields. Mr Douglas was his spitting image, all righty. (Mr Tagliana, the present owner of the café, felt left out and went around claiming he bought the café from another Mlle. Ravoux who lives in Southern France.)

Douglas had his head in a sling and finally explained to reporters that the film was beginning at the end of van Gogh's life and van Gogh had just cut off a piece, only a little piece, of his ear, but that the self-portrait with the bandage had been done using a mirror which made everyone think he'd cut off the other ear, but no, it had been this ear

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and just a little piece at that, but because he had painted himself in a mirror, everyone thought ...

Minnelli, a nice carefully-spoken man, beamed approval. He seemed due for another reputation film, something to stand beside *Ziegfeld Follies*, *An American in Paris* and *The Bandwagon*—perhaps even go Huston's *Moulin Rouge* a few licks better. *Lust For Life* was going to get on the *inside* of a man and his art in a way that Huston never dreamed of. This was going to be a superlative movie. Let the doubters doubt; let the laughers hee haw; it was a great subject. Granted Lautrec was an easier box office touch than van Gogh: Lautrec was blacksheep, runaway nobility—a dwarf, physically set apart from his fellowmen, whereas van Gogh was a pretty husky chap. What's more, Lautrec was a gogetter with a trade, postermaking, whereas van Gogh, what could you say about him? Vincent van Gogh: a sponge, a nobody painter of nobodies—a sponge by his own admission.

A sponge.

Well. But this Vincent was what is known as a great painter, a great one. That boy could make your ears wiggle. And it was a good thing, too, he happened to be such a painter or his life would have been a pretty sorry circus. Cutting off his ear like that. But he *had* been a great painter: that was the gimmick. Still ... if the audience missed that point, or, worse, if they didn't care, what then? what was left? This was no doubt just why Minnelli had been given the job. It was up to him to make the palette palatable. He had restraint:

"Why wish to condemn 'mannerism' in the cinema when we allow it in the other arts? Like the minor painters of the Italian Renaissance, Minnelli seduces us with the finesse of his touch, the discreet elegance of his palette, the dream-like interpretation of his backgrounds:... if from a scene we retain only a lingering impression of two green gloves before a blurred red vista, what matter? A man of taste, when so clever a technician, should succeed in convincing us that good taste takes the place of everything."

Cahiers du Cinéma, Christmas Issue, 1955

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In spite of Minnelli's merits and the confidence which MGM must have felt in him to let him pack off for Europe like that, Culver City was keeping its scissors crossed. After all, it was one thing to have a story and another thing to have one. A movie is born in its copy, but behind the alliterative wrinkles of the film's promotion lies a bald concern with just what kind of a story the van Gogh story was.

PICTURE

OF THE MONTH

in

CinemaScope

"Lust For Life" is the story of the great sensualistpainter Vincent van Gogh who bounds through the pages and passions of Irving Stone's perennial bestseller. And this is the Van Gogh overwhelmingly brought before us by Kirk Douglas in M-G-M's film version, shot in CinemaScope and a sunburst of color on the actual sites of Van Gogh's struggles to feel feelings never felt before.

(Two-tone drawing of Vincent attacking a model)

Above all others, this man is the passionate exemplar not only of the artist born ahead of his time but of the lover who loves not wisely but too well. Kirk Douglas has never before given so remarkably real a performance.

"Lust For Life" overflows with vivid flesh-and-blood portraits. Van Gogh's violent friend Gauguin is explosively created by Anthony Quinn. His faithful brother Theo and the faithless Christine are consumately etched by British stars James Donald and Pamela Brown. Director Vincente Minnelli, producer John Houseman, scenarist Norman Corwin have indeed made "Lust For life" a *must* for everyone.

For they have sent tumbling toward us, in a steady stream of primary color and emotion, the whole tempestuous truth of a career that vibrated from the black coal pits and sky blues of Holland to the voluptuous yellows of Arles and the red and ready lips of Moulin Rouge and Montmartre... from genteel ladies he frightened away to women of the Paris streets in whose dark souls only a Van Gogh could find the sun.

Here is the historic episode of the severed "Ear". Here is the wild proposal to the woman whose "No! No! *Never*!" spilled like acid across his youth. Here is the gaucherie and greatness of one who clutched life to his breast as if to crush both it and him.

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The ad winds up with an appeal to Americans to put aside lowbrow qualms and highbrow heir-splitting—

> Some say Van Gock. Some say Van Guff. Some say Van Go. We say—simply and sincerely—Go!

The pronunciation of van Gogh's name had been a thorny question since the film's inception. A compromise was made; it was decided to change the pronunciation according to the country where the scenes were to take place: Van Go in France, Van Gock in Holland, Van Guff in Culver City.

There were other problems not so easily settled, and over the week-end Minnelli came and went between Paris and Auvers, everywhere and nowhere, seeing people, nice people like Gene Kelly, who dropped in to wish him luck, and re-seeing people like the son of Dr. Gachet, the doctor who cared for van Gogh at Auvers. You'd suppose that the son would take a lively interest in the film, perhaps model as his father, or at least let MGM make use of his fat collection of van Goghs. But the son was one of these unimaginative casuists who simply ask "why?". He promised not to sue, but, adamant, he would have no part of what he seemed to feel was a base design.

Others in the town collaborated warmly with the project. Mr. Tagliana, the café owner, foresaw a boom in the tourist trade, and strutted around smoking heavy Bandwagon cigars while the grips (movie stagehands) tackled his café with the zeal of a vice-squad, carting off peanut machines and coke boxes, antiquing the bar, disposing of bottles with vintage dates, changing the lights, tables, wallpaper—all under the direction of la MGM's art historians. Tagliana confessed himself an art lover, but seemed unacquainted with the temporal nature of movie props; he said he thought he'd just leave everything as they left it and start a jimdandy museum.

The townhall across from the café had remained pretty much as van Gogh had painted it, except for the air raid sirens in the belfrey. These were fixed for the picture to look like bells. Trees were planted around the village square, pennants strung, cobblestones rolled out on Avenue General

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de Gaulle and everything made ready for the big pay-off scenes leading up to the Go—kid's death.

Monday, August 1. 'Twas brillig, and the company XXX'd out to the wheatfield for set rehearsal. The farmer who owned the field saw la MGM coming and threatened to harvest, but premium was paid for the wheat and the grips got busy plowing up paths and giving the grass a Toni so it all looked like van Gogh's painting, except for the crows. The crows—about 100,000 francs worth—were being kept in a big cage in the middle of the field and, just for the exercise, budgetman Kaplan, a short, dark, broad-shouldered man, took Minnelli and Freddy Young, the British Director of Photography, out to count them again. Crows were out of season and Pierrot (Pierre Roudeix, Fr., Propman) had the cage covered with blankets and was hand-feeding the scarce black things.

The group went over to see how Claude was doing. Claude (Claude Garaches, Fr.) had been hired to copy parts of van Gogh's paintings so Douglas could be shown polishing them off. Claude had taken over the job from Harry, a New York boy fresh out of art school. Harry, who had been flown over with the company, had lost his van Gogh touch at the last minute but Hans Peters had beaten the back yards of the Beaux Arts in Paris and found Claude. Claude really had the old stroke, and had worked up three or four wheatfields, some with crows, some without.

After kibitzing on Claude, Minnelli and Freddy Young, a toboggan-faced man with hornrims, set about spotting the cameras, a process in which the Director uses a small spyglass which frames the image to be seen by the camera lens. Minnelli went crouching around, squinting this way and that like a Gilbert and Sullivan pirate, while Sir Frederick followed along, counselling haste and nervously checking cloud speed through an amber polarized lorgnette. The sky was scattered with cloud-flak but everyone hoped shooting could begin in the afternoon.

Whenever Minnelli found a good angle for the camera,

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he'd freeze like a pointer while a cameraman dropped a chalk from the end of the spyglass, marked the spot and measured the height of the spyglass. The field was monotonously flat, and for variety, Minnelli called for a parallel, an adjustable platform used to elevate the camera. (Young called it a rostrum in relaying the order. This and other differences in nomenclature led to some confusion the first few days.) A parallel/rostrum was erected and Minnelli and Young climbed up, contriving to look very opera-boxy. More Ahabing around from the rostrum/parallel with Young getting more and more nervous. He felt rain, he said.

Enough spots were finally marked, lines drawn connecting them, camera elevations graphed, and tracks laid down for the dolly, a cart on which the camera is mounted for following the actors. (British term: velocilator.)

While the cameras were being set up everyone took ten, and the Le Dilhuit brothers, respectively Catering Man and Canteen Director, came around with the chuck-wagon and served alligator sandwiches, love-apple salad and cold veal, a last meal before the outdoor death scene.

During the break Minnelli got out his attache's case and started going over reproductions of the painting with Hans Peters, the Art Director. Peters had gotten off lightly in *Picture*, Lillian Ross's account of the making of *The Red Badge of Courage*, and everyone eyed him warily. After talking with Peters, Minnelli took up the spyglass again. Young looked incredulous, but was beginning to see: Minnelli planned to frame certain van Gogh paintings exactly so that pictures of the paintings themselves could be smoothly spliced in later. He went about planting poppies, patting down divots, arranging lusty bits of color, etc., assisted by Peters, Assistant Director André Smagghe, and four or five grips. There were no props in the field where van Gogh might commit suicide so Minnelli and the carpenter went over to see the farmer about buying a tree. They came back a while later with a dwarfish, white-barked apple tree that had a devaricated trunk which Minnelli seemed to feel especially proud of. Young had to agree it was a splendid

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specimen indeed. The tree was propped up since it was too short to be planted and a deep hole was dug beside it to plant Douglas so he could crotch himself naturally ready to end his denatured existence on celluloid.

While the tree was being dusted with pigment, Pierrot came puffing through the rye shouting incoherently: the crows were killing each other! A dozen were already dead. *Impossible!* And it began to rain.

And it rained. The sun came out every so often, just enough to keep the crew on stand-by. And it rained Tuesday: intermittent showers and low meter readings. Every few hours a weather report from Le Bourget airport and a crow count came in from Pierrot. Neither report was encouraging. Gloom at the wheatfield, which was becoming a regular Mudville.

Wednesday, village extras were given a raincheck on the fair and shooting went ahead in the wheatfield in spite of a shifty-looking sky. There were some two dozen crows left, but Young guaranteed Minnelli that with a wide camera frame no one would be able to count them. Kaplan, who is a hand with birds (rumour had it that he began as a propman), showed each grip how to put his crow asleep until the moment to throw: you tuck its black head under its black wing and you *rock* it.

Minnelli: Now I want all you boys to all come over here: André, please translate. André ... Where's Smog? André!

André: Me *voici*, Mr. Minnelli.

Minnelli: André—here, take it; good for the old *foie*—André, I want you to tell all those people to come over here by the camera. I want the head grip to look in the camera viewfinder so he can tell them where to throw their crows; we can't waste any crows out of the camera frame. I'd like them to throw their crows right at Kirk. I'll give another cigar to every man who hits him.

André: You mean they can let go of the strings, Mr. Minnelli?

Minnelli: Just translate, André, and tell that grip to snuff his cigar. That wheat is dry.

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The grips crawled off. Douglas, fatted for the kill, was found out near the company thunderbox and brought back to the easel. Minnelli waited for a little white cloud to get in the right place, then gave the order to *roll 'em. Speed! Slate!* —snap, crackle, pop: the wheat began tossing wildly and four or five tarballs blooped out and flopped back down again at the end of their strings. The grips stood up; they couldn't wake up their crows, they protested. Buckets of water were brought, the crows dunked and the grips went crawling off again.

Slate (July 27, 1890). Douglas flails his arms about, muttering over and over, "S'impossible—S'impossible—" then dabs in the flying cigars and lurches over to the apple tree where he sinks into his foxhole and fumbles for his final solution. Leaning ever so ozzily in the tree-crotch, 'poco-molto', slowly he turns, drawing a down-beat thumbbuster pistol Gauguin gave him from his pocket.

"Timm-berrr!"

Down fell the apple-tree, snap went the devaricated branch and a disappointed office-seeker from the village whooped that the cigar-seeded wheat was on fire.

Minnelli panned the horizon where his little white cloud had been replaced by a squid-like black one. The cloud, like those that arise from Europe in the *Chicago Tribune* political cartoons, was labeled DOUBT ...

In the Penal Colony

> *"You boil it in sawdust; you salt it in glue:*
> *You condense it with locusts and tape:*
> *Still keeping one principal object in view—*
> *To preserve its symmetrical shape."*
>
> *The Hunting of the Snark*

While Minnelli, out in the field, was busy holding nature up to the mirror, back at the Culver City studio Mr. John Arnold, Executive Director of Photography for MGM, grappled with the hydra-headed problem of photographing the paintings into emotive Cinemascope.

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For Mr. Arnold, "Lust For Life" was an 8000–foot clothes line on which to hang the paintings of a great (Dutch) painter:

"When Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer first considered *'Lust For Life*, based on the life of the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh, the most challenging problem posed was how to reproduce on the screen in the CinemaScope format the many Van Gogh paintings essential to the story. Even more important was the problem of how we were to bring these paintings to the screen with all the richness of texture and the fidelity of color for which Van Goghs are famous. ...

"As the story unfolds, Van Gogh, played by Kirk Dougles *(sic)*, is shown almost constantly in the process of turning out a canvas, a charcoal or an etching. The studio believed that interest in the story would be heightened considerably if (1) original Van Gogh paintings could be shown; and (2) reproduced on the screen with such vividness and fidelity as to arouse the admiration of art patrons and non-patrons alike; and (3) if the photography could be made flexible enough to permit moving in the camera for closeups of certain details of a painting whenever desired.

"And here is the package of problems which the achievement of all this might involve: the essential Van Gogh paintings are scattered all over the world—in private homes and in museums—which would make it necessary for a CinemaScope camera crew to spend well over two years just to photograph them, assuming that permission to photograph them with a motion picture crew could be obtained. It was quite obvious that this procedure would prove both impractical and too costly. Also, it was felt that many owners of Van Gogh paintings would strongly object to our bringing into their homes or museums the lighting and camera equipment that motion picture photography would require."

Mr. John Arnold, A.S.C.,
"A New Method of Insert Photography"
from *American Cinematographer*, January, 1956

Mr. Arnold got off to a good start in solving his problem. He decided to make handy 8″ × 10″ Ektrachrome colorslides (technically called transparencies) of van Gogh's paintings, then take the colorslides back to the studio where he could work his will on them with a CinemaScope camera.

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If practicable, this would save a lot of fuss, cost and time in the museums and private homes.

Step one was to get some 8 × 10's to practice with. Van Gogh owners Edward G. Robinson and Wm. Goetz let the studio into their parlors to make some dummy runs. More trial runs in New York's Wildenstein Galleries and the first phase of the battle was won: there was van Gogh in quarto size with a texture so rich you wanted to lick your fingers. Two crackerjack photographers, Ed Bagley in America and Dave Boulten in Europe were sent out to bag more 8 × 10's.

Part Two

SUN, WIND AND STARS

> *"In the room where De Guise lay dead, and the King came into look at him, and kick him a bit, I understood for the first time the very inferior, not to say plebeian affair at Holyrood, which was but a Scotch attempt to be as artistic as France."*
>
> *Henry Adams,*
> *"Letter to Elizabeth Cameron"*
> *quoted in* Discovery of Europe
> *by Philip Rahv*

In the middle of August the company left Auvers for Provence, stopping in Paris on the way for some quick studio work—the superintendant of the insane asylum at St. Rémy (Lionel Jeffries, Br.) dictating poison pen letters about Vincent's condition: ... copy to the department, copy to the registrar, copy to Culver City, copy to Mr. Théodore van Gogh in Paris: ... *nightmares last night... crows... suffering greatly... after his attack July 8... acute mania... but much improved... has requested his color box again... therapeutic if... if...* (aside in a decisive tone to secretary) "*Permission granted*!" —which the MGM company took as a rallying cry and boarded the Mistral Express for a Sunday run south and sunwards.

In Avignon the MGM sleepers were switched out of the Mistral Express, humped about and shunted through Taras-

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con to Arles where what looked like the Marne taxicab army was waiting. Attendants wearing MGM armbands—yellow on blue—passed out cards with hotel assignments and two by two most of the company got into cabs labeled "Jules César" and "Nord-Pinus", but Minnelli, with a hand-picked band, slipped out of town and hightailed across the *Camargue*, the badlands of France, headed for Les Baux, a ghost town high in the Alpilles—the chain of small mountains where Tartarin de Tarascon did his first roughing it. Douglas unknotted his ear and made steam for Monte Carlo to take Lollobrigida to a charity ball.

In Arles another schoolhouse had been found to laager the rolling stock which was being driven down from Paris, and in the school yard (Tarasconian sentries, admission by special pass from Loew's, Inc.) the hands were busy punching out false fronts for Vincent's little yellow house, bombed in '44, and for the sidewalk cafe, which used to be just across the street from the Nord-Pinus hotel but has since been replaced by a white elephant shoppe.

While Arles was being revamped, shooting was going to begin in St. Rémy at the asylum where van Gogh rested up a year before going to Auvers. St. Rémy is twenty miles from Arles on the far side of the Alpilles. The asylum there was reported to be in A1-OK 1889 condition.

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On the Road to St. Rémy

Itchy-fingered Dawn rustled over the badlands. The generators were hitched up and a section of movie-schooners, still dusty from the Paris-Arles trek, rattled out of the Arles stockade and began going 'round the mountains toward St. Rémy, following a low road that skirted the Alpilles near Tarascon. Later in the morning the lighter units formed in a motorcade in front of the schoolhouse and struck out with orders to pick up Minnelli and the others at Les Baux. The trail led across the *Crau* flats past the windmill of Alphonse Daudet, XXX, D78f snaking through olive groves up toward Les Baux.

Les Baux is named after bauxite, discovered nearby in 1822, but the town (pop. 50) dates from feudal times. In the 14th century, the castle was run by proud lords who defied kings, wore nativity stars and put to death anyone who intimated the host wasn't descended from one of the three magi—the one on the left with the frankincense. Troubadours and other visiting firemen who weren't in on the joke did half-gainers off the castle cliff into the present site of a swimming pool belonging to a 20th century château—the Baumanière, an exclusive resort that nestles like a mirage at the foot of Les Baux.

This was the hideaway where the leaders were supposed to be holed up. The Belgian chauffeurs honked. No answer, no sign of life. Just crows—hundreds and hundreds of them circling off the cliffs overhead. But they were there someplace—six, maybe more: the Camel, Tantó, the Kid, Nails, The Man with the Ear and Highwayman Quinn (Paul Gauguin, Fr., Artist). The chauffeurs took the scent and started scrambling up the cliff while the others took a peep around the hotel, destined to become a kind of Field and Stream summer whitehouse during the next few weeks.

The swimming pool had an overlooking Neptune terrace where tables were set up with elixir bottles labeled XXX, Blanc de Blanc des Alpilles—a stimulant. The cave behind

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the terrace turned out to be a cozy barrel-vaulted dining-room, with bits of armour glinting here and there, King Arthur chairs and sheepskin menus. This was one of the best twelve *tables* in France (as listed by the Guide Michelin, 1955). A door squeaked open next to the fireplace and Mr. Thuilier, the owner, a dark-complected man wearing a billowy chef's hat, came out looking very gingerbreadish. *Ouais*, some movie gentlemen were staying at the Baumanière, but they were staying in the little *cabanons* that the resort rented up in the rocks. Mosquitoes very bad in August, he added, tapping his temple.

The chauffeurs came back all covered with burrs to report that the leaders had already left for St. Rémy. Time for a challenging dip in the un-kidneyshaped Bouillabaisse pool, and the pack train continued on across the Alpilles and descended on the mission house near St. Rémy.

The generators were parked outside the asylum. The Dover Mail was pulled up beside the road where some men who from a distance could have been surveyors, microbe hunters, golfers, big game hunters or archeologists, were huddled in the dense shadow of a cypress. Overhead the whopping Midi sun hung like a big white medicine ball.

This Inverse Order of Things

After his Christmas Eve breakdown in which he cut off the lobe and perhaps part of the porch of his left or right ear, Vincent van Gogh finds the world beating a path to his door. "They're driving me crazy," he complains in one letter, and in another he puts his case more clearly: "Ah," he writes, "if nothing had come to *m'emmerder*." Finally no longer sure of himself, he has had himself committed to the Bar None Boby Lodge at St. Paul de Mausole, near St. Rémy.

Slate (May 9, 1889). Vincent and his faithful brother Théo (James Donald, Br.) face each other in a carriage approaching the gates. The two men exchange melancholy exchanges while the bizarre Provençale landscape wheels in parallax outside the coach window. Van Gogh looks out circumspectly, perhaps for the last time, on the whirling world forms

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wrestling under the conflicting demands of gravity and light —the nature that his badgered senses have already begun to betray. Under the carriage, six white grips jog along with their precious palanquin while the camera velocilates beside them, rapidly digesting the unbelievably beautiful landscape through the window.

"Wo-Ho!" boomed the voice of the Rainbow-Forger.

"Whoa!" translated the Megaphone-Wielder. "Bring it back here, you Yahoos. We'll do this thing right or, *ma foi*, we'll be here till sundown!"

Slate. The carriage wheels up to the asylum. The brothers alight. Théo walks Vincent to the hornèd gate, which is opened by Trabu, an aged superintendant. The brothers part—*ce n'est qu'un au revoir*—and Vincent passes into the garden beyond. Dissolve suggestively on a nun closing the gate...

Cell 23 Skidoo

"A large rose-tree stood near the entrance of the garden: the roses growing on it were white, but there were three gardeners at it, busily painting them red..."

'The Queen's Croquet Ground,' Alice in Wonderland

St Paul de Mausole was not in A1-OK 1889 condition, but providence had settled on the former monastery. The Ariel-like grips buzzed all over the place, dusting up the Roman

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church, retiling the cloister, scything the grass in the garden —thousands of dollars, but all the Mother-Superior could talk of was a chicken killed by the trucks, and complained ceaselessly that the crews must act and dress *comme il faut*, and cut the Boccacciola.

Lilacs and irises were other motifs in the garden. (On such matters the company double-checked with Mr. Douglas Cooper, the well-known American art historian who lives near Arles.) The grips tripped about planting them under the photosynthetic eye of Minnelli while Brother Young, anxious to shoot as usual, paced back and forth doing a sort of Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.

Other people were swinging about in a tree-prop, drilling in extra branches like you do with a lopsided Christmas tree. Nearby was a petrified bench beside a round stone basin with a fountain in the center. The fountain had no water, but otherwise it looked pretty darn good through the spyglass.

A plastic hose was uncoiled and run from the fountain back to a faucet near the asylum cloister and buried with leaves and grass. Since the faucet was beyond meg' range, Minnelli worked out whistle signals with a grip to regulate the water pressure: one tweet meant *mucho aqua*; two tweets meant *poquito aqua*. The grip savvied and cantered off; Minnelli handed the MP whistle to Assistant Director André, who took it willingly.

André started tweeting on cue but the fountain, manned by that goofball, geysered, then did a *Manneken Pis*, spouted up and spouted down, but wouldn't hold at the 1889 level. The rope trick went on and on while Brother Young kept making sounds in his throat and trying to light the spout from behind to set it off from the asylum buildings in the background. How discouraging. And of the great public who

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would see *Lust For Life?* How much real mail like this would Vincente receive?

"Hats off to you, Sir. Comparing van Gogh's design, J.-B. de la Faille's catalogue numero 1531, with your fountain at St. Paul de Mausole, I fail to detect one minim's difference. Hats off to you, Sir, and a vigorous handshake in thought.

Respectfully, Viaduct-le-Pont"

Slate (May 9, 1889). Van Gogh half-hears the gates snap shut behind him and, one ear off, the other ear on, walks up the lilac path to the asylum office. Dr. Peyron, the head of the asylum, welcomes the guest artist. Vincent would like to keep his paint-kit, but this is unadvisable, explains Dr. Peyron who, as played by Mr. Jeffries, is a balding, moustached, distraught widower who proves once more that an insane asylum director's work does rub off a bit.

Slate (May 9, 1889). It seems like a quiet friendly place. Van Gogh hangs up his brushes and is shown the way to his new *cabanon:* up a forbidding stairway and along a depressing corridor. Safe at last in the cabanon, Vincent tries the mattress, tips the MGM decorators and looks around. The cell has changed quite a lot since 1889 when he described it to Théo as having grey-green wallpaper, an old speckled armchair and sea-green curtains with pale-rose designs and blood-red streaks. Maybe the curtains are being cleaned. The walls have been whitewashed and Vincente has pinned a couple of nice prints on the wall to make it more homelike. The ceiling begins to crack from the heat of the arc lights. Time for just one transparency of Vincent looking out the window and another out the window, then everyone cleaned out. In making a transparency like the one out the window, a record is made of the camera height from the ground so that in projecting the transparency against a screen outside the rebuilt cell window, the vertical perspective can be preserved. All other important data such as camera type, pan, tilt, lens, stop, etc., is also carefully kept on a background report. This record makes it possible months later and— in this case— thousands of miles away, to reset the scene and add or

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subtract from it with perfect cinematographic homogeneity.

Slate (July 8, 1889). Vincent asks Dr. Peyron to please give back his brushes and says he'd like to paint outside the asylum walls. "Permission granted!" Tra la da-dum-da Dee dum—Peter Sweeney Vincent gambols out of the gate into the Tulgey Woods. We meet him face to face, 3″ lens, over the rocks near the quarry. Hi there, Vincent! All in a twinkling his happy face distorts. He squeeeeezes out a two-months' supply of chrome yellow "high note" on the rocks and tumbles backwards, beating his head viciously in an anthill, then on some foam rubber cow pads, then on some pine needles.

"Lily," says Vincente, meaning mark that take for positive development by Culver City. (A "Lily" is a spectrum board graduated from white-white to black-black, photographed at the end of a take to serve as a processing guide when the film is sent to the laboratory for development.)

Hark! The guardian, Trabu, does a sack race through the olive trees and on the eighth hole overtakes the raving artist. Together they do a three-legged race back to the magic fountain.

"Put that one in the icebox," says Minnelli. (The film was being kept in an icebox in Arles to preserve it while awaiting shipment.)

Oratorio of St. Paul de Mausole in St. Rémy

André (translating in meeting hall to mausoled Tarascon peasant): *Tiens, c'est un cadeau de M. le Directeur. C'est très bon d'ailleurs. Alors, maintenant tu es fou. Tu sais ce que c'est, un fou? Toque! Dingue! Tu fais le montagne russe. Tu fais comme ça:* (unwholesome antics): *tu fais comme cela. Eh bien, vas-y!*

Minnelli: That'll do, that'll do—André! Tell him to stop! Okay, quiet, quiet please everyone. Now that man there—no, not that one, that one—that apple is hanging on the threshold of eternity. Tell him, André, to look it. Quiet please everyone! No, on this side of the bars, André Charlie (Charlie Parker, Br., Make-up Director), Charlie, you and

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Vasco (Vasco Reggiani, It., Hair Dresser), work that man over. Here's the picture, got it? The Old Man in Blue. Hans, do you have the postcard? Put away that book. What is that you're reading? *Picture*? *Picture*! I don't care what she says. Freddy, give me a big blue brute-light over that man. Painter, give me some Cobalt there, some Powder there, some Prussian there, some Navy there, some Limehouse there, some True there, some Baby there, some Myosotis there, some Robin's Egg there, some Gillette there, some Sky there, sky *blue*.

In the Penal Colony

Minnelli and his roster had been in the field for more than a month now and the results were just beginning to trickle in to Culver City. The first 1000 feet marked 'Print Me' was not electrifying. Fifty-cent-a-second phone calls went out to Arles and Baumanière, wherever the samhill that was. The film rushes, as soon as processed, were sent right back to Provence so those goofballs could see for themselves.

Puzzle from Wonderland: Okay, so more than a month had passed since location had started. Supposing 1500 feet of *Lust For Life* interiors would be shot back in Culver City. A 1000 feet had already been shot in Auvers-sur-Oise and half of a predicted 3000 feet had been shot in Provence. Another 3000 feet would be shot in the Lowlands. Rights to the Stone book expired in December. Why was Minnelli being rushed, especially since this was big-budget and Mr. Arnold's 8 × 10's would run only a few minutes on the screen?

(And who in Culver City is responsible for putting Vincent's painting of the Restaurant des Sirènes at Arles in the Paris period? And who was it hung that self-portrait of Vincent-Half-Mad-in-the-Straw-Sombrero in Theo's apartment before Vincent had even arrived in Provence?)

Mr. Arnold, by the way, was getting along fine making pictures of van Gogh's paintings. Moscow was holding out on the Rey portrait, but his boys Bagley and Boulton by this

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time had brought back some two hundred 8 × 10's—worth eleventy-seven million dollars, said Mr. Arnold, counting them out in his laboratory. Just think, 16000 square inches...

"*What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?*"

Near the end of August, the Culver City Mail brought some film rushes back from processing. News of their arrival swept the stockade at Arles. On Sunday the leaders came down from Les Baux and the Belgian chauffeurs drove everyone north to Avignon which boasted the only Ciné-Palace in the neighborhood. Along the aisles it was whispered that Producer (*Jules Caésar*) Houseman was in the house.

TEST SLATE

Director: Minnelli
Director of Photography: Young
Sound ( ) Silent (X)
Name: Kirk Douglas
Make up: Ear# 12

Whirr, flicker...
Eyes front: Whirr
Left face, right ear: Buzz
Right face, left ear: Whirr
Flicker, whirr. Bloop...

SLATE

Day Sound
Director: Minnelli
Director of Photography: Young
Scene: 103 Take: 12
Lens: 2″, Ansco color # 248

Snappo!

Then there was Kirk, overwhelmingly brought before us, big as life, coming through the rye. Then there he was, doing the wheatfield Claude by Claude: dab-biff-parry-dab-dab... Then there came the birds. Golly. There came the grips standing up (rushes of a film are neither cut nor edited). Then there came the cigar-cutter. Bloop...

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SLATE

Lens: 3″

Snappo! There came Kirk again, big as hell, dabbing away at the wheatfield. "It's impossible, it's impossible!" Baby! Then there came the crows again. Gosh, they looked like thousands! There came Pierrot. Bloop...

SLATE

Lens: 4″

There came Kirk to the apple tree, tumbling toward us in a steady stream of primary color and emotion. There he goes in. Look at that look! Charlie, you did a great job of make up there! Gee, that's a jewel. Look at Kirk, boy, what a baby—look at that ol' sugar beetle go... There comes the woofledust. There he goes into his pocket. Look out, here comes the tree. Look out, Dumbo! Snappo! Bloop...

B.O. maybe, but, no, the rushes weren't exactly electrifying. After the matinee everyone filed out soberly into the lobby where Producer Houseman was waiting. Houseman, a renaissance man, speaks Linguaphone French, but didn't say a whole lot. There was some popcorn talk of how not so bad the rushes weren't, and the movie maxim never to judge a film by its rushes was invoked.

The ride back to Arles was long.

The *Lust For Life* rushes as they came back from Culver City were shown biweekly. After the second seance a small CinemaScope theater was discovered in Arles where the projection operator was more efficient, but nevertheless attendance slumped off. The directors were either exhausted or had eaten a bad *moule*. It was true that the rich Provençal diet had worked riot among the crew, especially the British members, and Dr. André Mottin, the medicine man, was doing a big business in castor oil jujubees.

Most of the crew were still staying at the Jules César in Arles and were now joined by Freddy Young who came down out of the hills, apparently done in by mosquitoes and Mr. Thuilier's daily no-choice menu. Minnelli, Tantó,

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Kaplan and Douglas also left Les Baux, but went to Avignon, only 25 miles north of Arles, just a breeze for the Belgian chauffeurs who made the run each morning in the hopped-up Cadillac and Chrysler. They felt at home in the flat Rhône delta. Quinn, single, was supposedly still boarded up at the Baumanière.

Near Philippi

Slate (May 16, 1890). Daytime. In Tarascon, ten miles west of St. Rémy, Vincent van Gogh, on the comeback road, boards an Iron Horse bound for Paris and Auvers-sur-Oise. The postman Roulin bids him adieu and flattens a centime on the rails. (In the screen version, shot used for Vincent's departure for St. Rémy— a trip both unlikely and impossible by rail.)

Slate (October 1888). Nighttime. Someone descends the staircase from the train station, pack-a-back, a seaman he. It is Vincent's violent friend Gauguin (Tony Quinn). On the second turning of the second stair, he pauses under a lamplight to roll a ciggie. The big-bad *mistral*—five walloping wind machines, courtesy *le* MGM, London—blows paper and tobacco from his hands and shivers the lamppost (paper maché). Gauguin gargles annoyance and wobbles down the dark street to roll van Gogh in the "house of light" at Arles.

"*My continuity!*"

Slate (August 1888). Phoofff!. Van Gogh stuntmans down a staircase and bumps into Postman Roulin (Niall MacGinnis) who, rollicking good piano-moving samaritan that he is, gives Vincent a hand moving Japanese silks and paint kit out of a hotel. Vincent is looking for a place with about four rooms, a red brick floor, with walls yellow on the outside and whitewashed inside so he can project the rushes in private.

"I know just the place," says Roulin.

Slate (May 1888).

"Here we are," says Roulin.

They have reached a market place on the other side of town. Lo! There stands the little, green-shuttered, canary-

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yellow house, "*la maison de lumière*", basking in sunshine like a civet cat.

"The landlord runs the place next door," says Roulin. "I live right over there, between the tracks of the *tortillard*."

Next door it's in full swing—a merry crowd scene, a little more air to sweeten the bottle. The hawkers' carts are brimming with colorful things, nearly good enough to eat. Vincent reaches for a strawberry lipstick, but Roulin cuffs him and marches him through Minnelli's cornucopia to see the greengrocer.

"Rent my little green-shuttered, canary-yellow house? *Peut-être*," says the greengrocer, a British surprise who speaks a fine Tuscan patois. The postman and the Green Knight haggle while van Gogh casts an oblique look about and picks his ear...

"Whoops! Stop! Cut! Ginette (Diamant-Berger, Fr., Scriptgirl)! Where's Roulin's pouch! And Kirk, will you please quit telegraphing your ear: you know why."

Sure enough, Roulin didn't have his mailbag from the hotel scene—and the greengrocer's awning wasn't down! This was the last straw. Minnelli, dressed in a pale shantung suit of which he had an inexhaustible supply like little Orphan Annie, folded up into his Italian campaign chair and refused to go on. He felt rushed, he said. Someone up there didn't like him. The Hessian crew rallied around the camp chair and while Dee and Dum worked a miracle with slate sandwiches Douglas climbed into a convenient corral with an Arlesienne toreodoress and made breathless passes at her with a horn-bumpered chariot. The girl did veronicas this-a-way and that while reporters took pictures, used later for bullfight publicity posters.

Slate (September 18). Back in character, Kirk has an American Flyer wagon and moves into the little yellow house, helped by Roulin and his son, Armond «*Portrait of the Young Man in Yellow:* 8 × 10, played nearly as well as painted by Claude Garaches). Deliriously happy, Vincent trips with a mattress in his excitement. A mischievous note darts from the flute section. (Music by Miklos Rozsa.)

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"*My Sunkist Ear!*"

Slate (Christmas Day 1888). A mob is gathered before the little yellow house. Gauguin dashes up; a gendarme stops him. Gauguin elbows past and goes indoors ... (Finished in Culver City.)

(Christmas Eve 1888) Van Gogh has rashly cut off what looks like a little piece of dried apricot, wrapped it up and put it in one of Rachel's red stockings at a local brothel. Prudish Arles is scandalized. The incensed citizens gather beneath the windows of the little yellow house. Someone in the mob must step forward and shout "Hey, crazy redhead, show us your ear!"

Who's going to say it? Extras get paid more if they've got a line, but this mob was composed of 100% Arlesiens who spoke no English. One by one, André tried out contestants. The flops—there were no discoveries—got a crack at more *grisbi* by competing for the job of shinnying up Pierrot the Propman's drainspout to beat on van Gogh's shutters.

This big scene, extremely visual and packed with all sorts of contemporary allusions, should demonstrate the intelligent use of a parallel/rostrum. If Young's camera were placed on the ground with the up-looking crowd, either the camera would seem antagonistic or van Gogh would look like a Goodyear ad when he appeared in the window. If Young's camera were placed behind van Gogh's shoulder, the apparition effect would be lost and his windup hampered. With the rostrum/parellel however, the camera could be on van Gogh's side but still see him do his spectacular cuckoo. So a parallel/rostrum for the camera was erected beside the green-shuttered, second-story window and loaded with a dozen rounds of ammunition for van Gogh.

Slate #*1—12*. The upturned faces of the crowd mill and de-mill about, all torchlit and griffithy. What is this, a fraternity panty raid?

"Huh-hey, crrrazy rrredhhead! Shshhow us yer earrr!" *Which* ear? A lucky scalawag scampers up the drainspout to knock up Vincent. Powwy! The shutters fly open. Pius X?

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Titus A.? Oedipus Rex? Mr. Belaker? Mr. Magoo? Old Lady O'Leary?

It's Douglas, our passionate exemplar, the spirit of Christmas past, wearing a swaddled head, orchid nightgown and a tasselled icepack with a sprig of holly through his ear. Whillikers! What's Charlie done to him!

Bleary-eyed and obviously interrupted, he coocoos thrice then cocks his arm and a grip hidden under the camera begins pelting down bed pans, paint tubes and porcelain ears on the crowd who recoil in a cowardly fashion. (Cut in Released Screen Version)

But what about that ear? For the inside events of this and the preceding nights (which will follow), Minnelli, Stone and other scholars have had to rely on Gauguin's version of things. So let's skim through a recent study of Gauguin's life and see what's what about that ear.

"The days sped by in the yellow house under that yellow sun. ...

Van Gogh said, 'Paul, am I a great painter?'

Gauguin said, 'Sure. We're all great painters.'

Van Gogh nodded. 'That's true, isn't it? You, I, Daudet, Millet, Mauve—'

Gauguin snarled. 'You and your damn Daudet and Mauve. And that sickly romantic Millet.'

Van Gogh said, 'Don't talk about them like that. I won't have it. With that low forehead of yours, you have no right to criticize.'

Gauguin began to laugh. Van Gogh picked up his absinthe and threw the drink in Gauguin's face.

Instantly Gauguin's hands were at van Gogh's collar. He pulled the Dutchman halfway across the table. 'Listen,' he hissed, 'Don't do that again. I swear I'll throttle you next time.'...

He had made up his mind to leave the yellow house as quickly as possible.

At supper, Gauguin said, 'You've poured turpentine into the soup again.' He tried to smile so that van Gogh would not get angry.

Van Gogh got up from the table and picked up his brush, still wet and dripping with red paint. He wrote on the wall:

Je suis Saint Esprit

Je suis sain d'esprit.

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Then he howled with laughter, tears running from his eyes. Gauguin heard him outside, stumbling in the dark, his laughter rising above the lashing *mistral.*

Gauguin went upstairs and packed his belongings. Then he started for the café.

Halfway across the Place Lamartine he heard heavy erratic footsteps behind him.

He whirled. Van Gogh stood poised, sunlight pouring out of his crazed white eyes. A razor lay naked in his hand...

In the morning Gauguin returned to the yellow house. A crowd gathered before the yellow door. Gauguin pushed forward. An Arles gendarme grabbed him.

He pushed into the house. A trail of blood led to van Gogh's bedroom. Vincent's body lay under the sheet, unmoving.

Gauguin reached forward a trembling hand. He pulled away the sheet. A bloody bandage covered the right (next question) side of van Gogh's head."

Ad Gordon, *The Flesh Painter*, 1955, Lion Library Editions.

On the Screen

It is perhaps interesting to note that the released screen version of *Lust For Life* follows Mr. Gordon's account point for point and nearly word for word. The argument between the two artists, however, is made to take place in the yellow house immediately *after* Gauguin's arrival and is, incidentally, an extremely effective universalization of the polarity between the two artistic temperaments. Realist Gauguin, on one side of the table, is portrayed as a rebellious sort who seeks to externalize his passions in violent recreation so he can create a static, highly-stylized and romantic world on canvas. Romantic van Gogh, though equally a man of violent frustrations and passions, finds an outlet for his emotions only in his paintings. Algebraic and *post hoc* though this characterization is, it succeeds where the movie seemed bound to fail, in dramatizing the differences not only between the artists' temperaments but between their aesthetics.

(In the movie the bandage does cover the left side of van Gogh's head, but Gauguin is told by the inspector simply that

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"He sliced off his ear"—we are still in the dark about how *much* of the ear.)

Slate (December 24, 1888). House guest Gauguin takes his tooth-capbrush and leaves the wee yellow house. Van Gogh chases him. The two artists play a hair-raising game of 'I spy' around the Arles' Coliseum. Cats in the narrow streets (Kaplan, who is a hand with cats, showed the grips how to keep them in place with pieces of meat). Close-up of a frothing, eyeball-rolling Vincent—no genial host, no sir.

"Give me another bird in another cage and I'll do it again, so help me, I'll do it again!"

Blackstone the Magician

Terrasse de café, la nuit

The jogged, narrow streets of Arles—laid out (says Irving Stone) to baffle the *mistral*—were tough to work in, and the Place du Forum was all activity under the floodlights. A statue of Frédéric Mistral, *tête dans la lune*, stood in the center of the little square with on the right the Hotel Nord-Pinus, on the left the Braque-esque sidewalk café front which beetled back and forth over the heads of the company. In the background some fluted columns supported the Forum Hotel. A narrow street led back into the shadows where something that looked like the stump of the Eiffel Tower (this is 1888) was bobbing on the skyline making the place seem like a stage set for *La Folle de Chaillôt*. It was midnight but the Arlésiennes were hanging from their windows, humming the theme from *La Strada*.

Dee and Dum passed around baskets of real, honest-to-

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goodness grapes and while Minnelli swivelled back and forth with the spyglass, Young swept about in his worsted toga, camouflaging "hot spots", flat areas that reflected too much light. Van Gogh had left out the shadows in many of his paintings, making lighting was a real headache.

Young: Pierrot, we need a blackout board at the end of the street and do please ask those people up there to be good enough to stop that obscene whistling and close their shutters. Leave those two and that one and that one open. (To Mssrs. Champel-Policard, Fr., Gaffers-in-Charge-of-Juicers:) Mr. Minnelli would like some stars up there above the street. Floodlights with blue paper should do it, what would you say, Mr. Cooper? Oh, snows you too, does it?

(To cameramen:) Blimp it; Mr. Minnelli says that this is sound. Now then: the camera will velocilate down the alley, pan with Mr. Douglas and Mr. Quinn, then follow them into the café. *Tout prêt*, there? Places chalked? Now, *in panning*, the camera will discover the Zouave, Mr. Milliet... Where is he? Mr. Minnelli would like him slouched against that wall as—hrumph—in Mr. Goof's painting.

(To Charlie Parker, Makeup Man:) Mr. Parker, have you the reproduction? O, there we are, thanks. Say! Who's been writing on the back of it like this?

Parker: Vasco done it. He wanted to send it to his mother in Genoa, but I wouldn't let him.

Young: Tell Vasco he can bloody well buy his own postcards. Where's Mr. Milliet, the Zouave?

Parker: He's all made up having a drink, but he's gotta look drunk anyhow so it don't make much difference, anyhow that's what Vasco says. Jiggers, hide the grapes; here comes Vince with the keyhole.

Minnelli duckwaddles past, looking through the finder and talking to Hans Peters.

Minnelli: I don't care *what* she says, Hans. *I'm not John Huston.*

Young: Mr. Plunkett, have *you* seen the Zouave?

Walter Plunkett: I gave him his costume and he took off for the North Pole over there.

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Charlie and Vasco, the Gemini twins, went across the street to find the Zouave, and Young continued to direct the electricians who were stringing up a brilliant Dog Star between the roofs. The Arlésiennes were giving Pierrot and his door-to-door men a hard time about closing their shutters, but one by one the windows darkened, Canus Major came out above the street, and through the spyglass the scene began to take on a church Christmas crib surreality. Virtually all that Douglas and Quinn had left to do was stand on the chalk marks and put their heads through holes in the café front like Modiglianis.

Vasco and Charlie, the two stars and Mr. Milliet came out of the Nord-Pinus' Bar Américain. Vasco, Charlie and Plunkett spruced the artists up a bit and a *brule-geule*, a pondersome pipe with a trap in the stem like on a Drano label, was plugged up with some *manufacture d'état* and planted in Douglas' pocket.

Slate (September 1888) Van Gogh and Gauguin are still on liberty in the cat-ridden streets. Someone whistles *La Strada*. The two come down an alley where a Zouave is slouching against the wall. It's Milliet, to whom van Gogh has been giving art lessons.

Gauguin and van Gogh sit down at the clean, well-lighted place across from the Nord-Pinus and Vincent tinders his pipe as the camera pulls up a chair for a ping-pong shot of the two talking art. (The camera doesn't really "bounce" back and forth between the two speakers. The entire dialogue must be reshot as many times as there are different camera positions, and the successive shots of the dialogue are later cut up and interspliced back in the studio. The following ping-pong shot is seen from the cutting room.)

Camera on—Vip van Gogh who begins puffing away meditatively, coughs, and starts making conversation with Gauguin who is heard ordering an absinthe. Gauguin says, What'll you have? Van Gogh says, Gimme a brimstone lamp inlayed on a jade, ultra-violet Louis XV counter—with lemon. He sketches one. We hear Gauguin say, Two straws; give him my absinthe. Vip bites hard on his powderhorn and

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continues marking up the tablecloth, then leaps up and shouts Give me *tobacco*. A hand appears like to Moses in the Ravenna mosaics (this is color, Sarnoff) holding a tin of P.A. Another hand snaps a slate, Pierrot, the snip, screams.

Camera on—Gauguin, who hiccoughs, orders another house lamp, two *tartes à la crême*, and a caveman sandwich with a side of love-apple salad. Van Gogh is heard puffing away meditatively and scratching on the table. Gauguin hums "My little Bimbo down on a Bamboo Isle," chuga-lugs his lamp and says Let's go inside (to the poolroom at Culver City).

Camera on—Van Gogh, who says Paul, guess what? I see a cauliflowery ear on a conical nimbussed head walled up in infinity. We think we hear Gauguin chalking a cue stick and listening to the *mistral* in Vincent's left concha.

Camera on—Gauguin, who is not chalking a cue stick, but lasciviously sipping van Gogh's absinthe. We hear van Gogh struggling to feel one of those feelings never felt before. Gauguin, who has had one suphur lamp too many, leers cheerily and says, What a crazy mixed up kid. Come off it, Brigadier. Relax. Come on, play; one-eared jacks are wild, Brando. We think we hear van Gogh stropping a razor.

Camera on—Van Gogh, who is not stropping a razor but wetting his color chalk.

Camera on—the table top, which is taken away from Vincent by the manager, a little *bonhomme* in white, but replaced at once with a nice clean one covered with Claude's spiffy sketches.

La Mancha

> *"The days sped by in the yellow house under that yellow sun. The Arles* mistral *sprang up, great gusts of sand-laden wind, whipping up sand from the Mediterranean, blinding the artists sitting in the fields. Finally Gauguin looked with disgust at the sandsplotched canvas..."*
>
> *Ad Gordon,* The Flesh Painter, *ibid.*

Slate

"How can you act under such Conditions!" cries Gauguin, flailing his Arms at the Wind-Machines. The Wind blows

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down his Easel. He sets it up again. Zoop, off flies his Neck-Wigger.

The Wind-Machines begin whipping up more Sand from the Mediterranean. Gaugin stumbles over to Van Gogh, who has a big Boon-Docker Buskin with which he is calmly nailing his Easel onto a Wine-Cart.

"How can you act..." repeats Gaugin, but the Betatron spins him around like a Top and rat-a-tat-tat, blows out all his Teeth-Caps.

"Sooth," quoths the Invincible Vince de la Crau, "this great Wind is within me and is clearly meant as a Sign of my approaching Folly. If it likes you now, go back to your mountain Cabanon and your gap-toothed Wenches, but I'm out to paint that lordly Race of Mutents, newly sprung from thy Teeth-Caps."

"PoppyCock," quoths Friend Gauguin de la Strada, blinded by a new Batch of Sand from the Mediterranean. "Those ain't Mutents thow seest, but luckless hoomin Grips, doomed to forever paint this lustreless provençal Greenery."

The Winds stopped, as if by Magick, and Jimminy Crickets, some unrecognizable Beings bearing Insecticide Sprayers filled with Metro-Color headed off for the Alyscamps to get Things ready for the next Shot, a Gauguin Canvas with Gauguin Colors! And Jeepers, when Minnelli saw how good the Flowers looked painted Red, he said to paint the Grass Red too, and when he saw how real that looked he said get busy on the Trees, and when it was all done, Wowy, the Earth was Red and the Trees were Terracotta and the Sky was Black and Young was bloody Purple, and it all looked so absolutely you felt like crying and never wanted to go back to California again, never, not for Anything.

At the end of August, most of the heavy equipment began wending its way northward toward Amsterdam, but Minnelli, Kaplan, Young and Douglas remained behind with a skeleton crew to wind up walk-throughs in Provence.

The walk-throughs took a week—a real drag: load up the flower wagon and camera truck, speed through the country,

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unpack the camera while the Hatter and the Hare hunt the Snark with the spyglass. *Slate*—Douglas walking through an orchard looking for arrowheads. Pack up the cameras, XXX to the seashore, unpack, lobster quadrille. *Slate*—Douglas with a kettle looking for Slag and pink ears; *Slate*—Douglas on a barn roof with a pot of India ink, spying on the nuns; *Slate*—Douglas with reeds doing the haystacks off Montmajour; *Slate*—Douglas taking tolls at the William Kaplan Memorial drawbridge; *Slate*—artist on the road to Tarascon, looking for lost gockballs, artist at night on the banks of the Rhône, painting by the light of a six-candle power, *mistral*-proof straw hat (On supply at most leading art shops or write directly to Nite-art Hangover Hats, Ltd., Oatmeal, Illinois. We also have in stock a limited supply of teething ears, kool-aid absinthes, pepermint teethcaps, high-yellow dentrifrice, Toni-turf, sabletuft neck-wiggers and sure-fire folly lamps.)

Part Three

THE BACK NINE

...being very amusing in its way but
far too cryptic for the average reader.
—a rejection slip

September 10. Holland spread out like an immense fairway before Minnelli, Young, Kaplan and Douglas as they flew in from Provence and taxied up to the Cinetone hangar in Amsterdam. All but about 20 or the 60-odd French members of the crew had been given their walking papers when the company left France and 19 Dutchmen were hired, thus complying with the union law that requires a company to hire half of its crew in the country where shooting takes place. (The Americans, British and Italian totaled about 17, exclusive of actors.)

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Introductions took place in the Cinetone studio which houses a village called Dollywood where puppet films are produced. The new crew seemed happy to get off their strings for a few days. The "bühnes", Dutch grips, bounced around in snappy brown coveralls, adding to the hangar effect. They were going to work with real live flesh-and-blood actors for a change.

A cross section of a weaver's hut had been built on a two foot platform in one part of a sound set, with next door a corrugated potato eaters' hut. The weaver's hut contained a petrified loom, one of several borrowed from a museum. The loom, not being MGM property, hadn't been painted, but Minnelli had had bright threads and Irish pennants tied all over it and several weavers were climbing about trying to thread the rafters.

The potato eaters' quonset was a mess. Assistant Director Gerard Rutten had officially taken over André's whistle but Mr. Rutten suddenly lost his command of three languages and André remained on duty. Minnelli was outdoing himself with the snorkel—woeful tip-off that the shot was going to have another Arnold 8 × 10 superimposed. A table was set up near the center of the hut, overhung by one of those brimstone lamps with upstage a crackling fire for Lincoln van Gock.

Late in the day the potato eaters were marched in from the snack bar, champing at the bit, but the order came through the megaphone for everyone to clear the set and go have some tea. A half-hour later when everyone came back from the East India Co. warehouse, Minnelli, still brooding by the fire, said scrape off the paint and redo it, every hard-caked little pigment of it. There were no objections, but a lot of mumbling because scuttlebutt had it that the company would leave Amsterdam tomorrow, and the weaver's hut and the canal scene still had to be shot, and who wanted to work all night? *Bleu de Paris* was the new color scheme, and while the bühnes started pouring it into the concrete mixer, the rest of the crew was whisked off through the dark streets to Amsterdam's one regularized red light street.

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Business As Usual

Les girls were all sitting in their shop-windows, knitting and basket-weaving and waiting for gentlemen callers, when La MGM rolled up. A crowd of sight-seers gathered and were pushed back, but some Runyonese chaps in the crowd refused to be shoved. They said they were losing money because their girls couldn't work—which was true, after all. Brief huddle, then Kaplan, who is a handy man to have around, came over with his satchel stuffed with rubles, guilders and whatnot and began paying off. It was some nick off the budget, but the girls did draw their shop curtains, and the company settled down to the work at hand.

Slate (1881) A long shot of the canal, the quay and a bridge, with on the far side of the bridge a square and the house of

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young widow Kee-Kay, Vincent van Gogh's inamorata No. 2 (he had run a heart-breaking second with his landlady's daughter in England).

The crew, waiting on the quay, had to guess what was happening inside the house. They knew Vincent was in there but the rest would be shot in Culver City. This was doubtless a trigger scene—maybe an opener.

Slate. Van Gogh comes out of the house, very downcast, wringing his hand. On the bridge he takes a 20000 league look down into the canal then crosses to our side of the street, and starts coming toward the camera. Why there's Pamela Brown, the British actress! But Hi there, Pamela... Ulysses van Gogh, thoroughly depressed, steps into Wimpy's to have a Heineken's. (Pamela Brown— *The Lady's Not For Burning*—made an appearance on the set, but just as suddenly disappeared again. She was merely soaking up atmosphere for her role as faithless Christine, Vincent's third love—a cigar smoking prostitute with whom he teamed up in the Hague after getting burned in Amsterdam.)

The camera was moved up in front of the pub. Van Gogh came out and *Slate*, goes back in again for a close-up dissolve. The curtains draw.

The camera was moved onto the bridge for a 3″ lens shot of van Gogh looking down in the canal. Douglas, dressed to kill in a maroon store-bought suit with shoestring tie, got on the outside of the railing and *Slate*, broods Steigishly down into the camera which is mounted on baby legs on the bridge. The dark waters churn beneath him, threatening another dissolve into other faces, other rooms.

The camera, back on long legs, was moved over in front of Kee-Kay's house where, *Slate*, Vincent comes out again wagging his distaff hand, and makes off for the sunny side of the canal.

Midnight on the Cinetone Sound Set

"Okay. Potato eaters! Let's move."

"*Mangeurs de pomme de terre! Allons-y.*"

"*De Kartofflesser, alstublieft!*"

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The gang of eaters surged forward, had their meal tickets punched and *the* Mother Hubbard, *the* Alice-au-bûcher, *the* Sporting Life, *the* Sister Carrie and *the* Uncle Remus were seated clockwise around the table. Jason Douglas came out of his Fruehauf wearing a fleecy garment that looked like a flyer's jacket turned inside out. It was pretty racy and he baa-ed a couple of times—just breaking the tension. Douglas sure wasn't rushed. What a guy's guy. He tried a spud and poked the fire while Minnelli rechecked the eaters against the painting and Charlie gave them more nose putty.

The directors thought it would be best if the peasants looked happy during the scene, but Sporting life, who didn't speak *anything*, couldn't get the idea. Uncle Tom had been cribbing on the reproduction and he thought the painting was sad too. But no, it was sad, maybe, but leave that to us and Kirk there. You know Kirk, there. Yeah, that's it, watch Kirk there. Keep it up...

Slate (1885) The famished potato eaters begin vacuuming up the spuds. The stupefied peasants poured down pot after pot of tea and wolfed down platter after platter of potatoes for a dozen retakes, but not even Alice got sick. When it was all over the company went next door to Mr. Weaver's, a man with a "dreamy, nearly somnambulistic air" (van Gogh's *Letters*). The biggest loom was already going to press and an unusual red and white checked tablecloth was lolling out of one end. A loommaster had been hired to coach the *Tisserand* in running the loom, but the sleepy apprentice, a dead ringer for van Gogh's weaver, couldn't get with it. The loommaster boomed out the cadence—Clink, clonk, Oomp-draka; clank, clunk, Oomp-draka. The shuttle popped out of its channel and almost carried off the head of a baby who, little angel, had been placed in a three-wheeled basket beside the loom. Clink-clonk, Oomp-draka—the berceuse continued. When the shuttle wasn't flying around the hut, it was stuck in the groove. Minnelli was disgusted; the loommaster was ashamed; everyone was poohed.

Four AM. Clink, clunk, Oomp-draka; clank, clonk...

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In the Penal Colony

> "'*But we've seen* Elephants *before,*' *the Emperor grumbled.*
> '*Yes, but not through a* Megaloscope!' *the Professor eagerly replied. ...* '*And* this *is a* Megaloscope! *The Gardener will now bring in the next Specimen. Please open* both *curtains, down at the end there, and make way for the Elephant!*'"
>
> *Lewis Carroll,* Sylvie and Bruno Concluded

We left Mr. Arnold back in Culver City with more than a quarter of a million dollars-worth of colorslides. The Tisserand and essential van Gogh etchings and charcoal sketches of the Lowlands period posed new problems:

"These works failed to register on the Ektachrome color film in all the gradations of greys and blacks that were in the originals. So a somewhat complicated process was developed for making enlargements which involved a combination of photography, photostat, and silk screen process.

"First we shot the black-and-white art with Ektachrome, then made a dupe negative which is used in the first step of the photostat process. The original Ektachrome was then printed by projection over this initial exposure. After the print was processed, the silk screen method was then employed to add the necessary highlights."

Mr. John Arnold, A.S.C.,
The American Cinematographer,
January, 1956

By neatly controlling each step in the process Mr. Arnold was able to capture the black-and-white art "with all the fine gradations inherent in the originals." Ready for the last step in the Arnold Ektachrome Process.

The colorslides were convoyed over to La MGM test laboratories where Mr. Arnold was waiting behind a device he had invented to metamorphose the 8 × 10's into CinemaScope. The apparatus consisted of a sort of buzz-saw table with instead of a buzz-saw, a CinemaScope camera mounted on tracks aimed at a large black screen. In the center of the screen was a small frame like the kind used in card levitation tricks, with a slot in the top just big enough for an 8″ × 10″.

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A self-portrait of van Gogh was selected at random from the deck, clamped in the holder, lit up and its color temperature taken behind both ears. The seance began. Pocketa-pocketa-pocketa, *queep*—the portrait, manipulated by black wires, slowly began to wig-wag, then did a little figure "4", then went into a sort of bump-and-grind routine while all the while the camera, hooked up to a two-speed gear box and rigged with a special schnozzola lens, taxied back and forth on the tracks—clink, clonk, Oomp-draka—feeling the monk's cloth in Vincent's lapel and hunting for egghead breakfast in his moustache.

The photographed 8 × 10's were then projected and— O frabjous day!—each painting came to life exactly as though photographed directly by Minnelli in the field, dolly in, dolly out, scan, pan, zoom, tilt up, tilt down, dissolve! Lo! There were the ex-essential van Goghs, big as life, faithfully reproduced pigment by pigment, 1,600,000 square inches, all ready to go to market.

The Arnold Ektachrome Process was a *fait accompli*, a golden spike between graphic and motion picture art. All that remained was for Minnelli to bring home the bacon.

Bogeys

> "*La lutte avec la nature a parfois quelque chose de ce que Shakespeare appelle* Taming the Shrew."
>
> *Vincent van Gogh*

Sure enough, after working a straight 18 hours, the company left Amsterdam by bus and headed for the Brabant, a mournful region in southern Holland. At s'Hertogenbosch (hometown of Hieronymus Bosch) the crew split up: one spearhead to Eindhoven, another to Helmond; Minnelli and the leaders detoured into the duke's forest someplace.

After 40 winks, the crew was reconvoked in front of the White Swan café in Nuenen, van Gogh's hometown. (Van Gogh's father, a protestant minister, was transferred to Nuenen in 1883 when Vincent was 30 years old.) From the White Swan the company marched on old dominus van

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Gogh's (Henry Daniell) presbytery. The new dominus had been buzzed (by helicopter) nearly two months ago and warned that MGM would come, but now on second thought he didn't take to the idea. The bühnes brought in the wheelbarrows of flowers anyway, which Minnelli, for some reason, arranged into a diamond pattern. *Slate*, rookie van Gogh, the prodigal son, apparently gets the signal to become a preacher.

The rest of the week was spent sloshing around in the Brabant doing scattershots and walkthroughs:

Slate, Rysdaël van Gogh sketching the windmills, *Slate*, Germinal van Gogh sketching peasant huts, *Slate*, Millet van Gogh sketching peasants—real peasants who got upset when the bühnes chased their cows into camera range, and others with cockney accents who wielded tools of the proletariat and asked Vincent stumpers like how long does it take to do a painting. "Sometimes two hours, sometimes two days, sometimes years," says Cuddie with a faroff look while another claude drawing goes on the easel.

Each day Dee and Dum drove out with wholesome lunches for the company. The Dutch crew sat at a separate table with milk and slate-burgers; the French crew had wine. Morale was low, the weather lousy, and it was no idyll following Douglas with his hike-o-meter across the Brabant. When the crew griped about ruining their shoes, Kaplan, who began as a propman, drove up a truck full of size 11 EEE boots for everyone.

During these walkthroughs, the crew was still split up in Helmond and Eindhoven but nobody knew where Minnelli and the others were staying until a rainy day when the EEE's were all piled in a corner of the White Swan and Walter Plunkett, Wardrobe Director, started talking:

Give me California, said Walter, down in the dumps. In California at least we don't have to cross a moat to go to work. You guys think you've got it tough with your big boots and no showers. Well, we're up in a castle, a real Smithsonian institute. I've got the smallest room. It's in a turret, I think. It's about as big as a closet. There's no heat;

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the water's cold; the floors are all squeaky. You've got it tough? You're at least in a town for Pete's sake; out there there's nothing for miles except this goddamned daily fee prairie. Give me California, all right.

And you should see the place at night. There's nowhere to go, and you want to live it up a bit, maybe talk to somebody. The turret gives you the creeps. So you go downstairs into the living room, if that's what they call that morgue—that's where the only heat is, in this big stone fireplace. So you come in to fraternize a bit maybe.

There's Minnelli and Young way off in one corner buried in Skira comics; there's Mrs. Minnelli in another corner knitting; there's Houseman and Kaplan doctoring the scorecards. Nobody even looks up when you come in. Then some footsteps come down the other staircase. It's Kirk. He deadpans the room from the doorway and goes back upstairs. You're supposed to think he's Macbeth or something.

I tell you guys, you shouldn't gripe. And wait till we get to the coalpits! That's not going to be California either ...

¿Quo Vadis, Vincente?

On September 18, the company crossed into Belgium. The Dutch bühnes were traded for Belgian grips and HQ was set up in Mons. Plunkett was right: the Borinage mining area around Mons was not California. It was right out of Dali or off a Stan Kenton album. Nasty oilskin skies spermed over the horizons with at every vanishing point a rickety

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tinkertoy mine appendage or a pyramid of slag looking like a volcano from Disney's play on Stravinsky. The sooty little towns in the region—Wasmes, Cuesmes, Pâturages, Flénu—had shoveled under and into each other and it was hard to tell which one you were in. The XXX crew had staked the area with arrows marked XXXP4, XXXMO, XXXVH, XXXPH, etc., which everyone was supposed to know was code for Pit #4, Main Office, Van Gogh's Hut, etc., but nobody knew. The signmen blamed the miners for screwing up the signs. The trucks crisscrossed back and forth through the slagheaps.

"*Quel cauchemar! C'est une autre fin morte!*" cried Mr. Houseman, leaning out of his car window. "Come on, you men, follow me in your truck." There was nobody at the end of the P4 arrows either. Late in the day everyone bumped into each other at the People's House in Cuesmes where Vincent was slated to do a little preaching. The crew was ushered in and quietly admonished to soft pedal the Jack Armstrong stuff because the "People's House" was communist sponsored. The local brotherhood had been nice enough to lend the place to *Lust For Life*, which they seemed to believe was a message film on the mining life.

Slate (1878) Preaching man van Gogh mixes up a little hellfire and brimstone lamp for the miners in the *Salon du Bébé*. He's not Father Mapple, but he feels deeply and has withering 4″ contact lenses. On the third slate he catches the eye of a fallen away oaf in the last pew who spits and walks out.

Slate. Beadle van Gogh chases the apostate and crooks him just before he enters his *cabanon* on Dolphin St. It is Big/Chas/John Decrucq, mine foreman at pit number 4. The camera nuzzles up for a ping-pong shot of Vincent and Big Chas/John, the gruff stone face, who wears a Sou'wester, smokes a pipe and has a silicosis hack.

Big Chas/John says in effect that Vincent is still wet behind the ears, then spits on Vincent's sandles and blows smoke in his eyes—two annoying habits.

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"But how can I reach you miners?" asks Vincent, his eyes burning.

Big Chas/John gets grim. "Look," says he, clearing his throat, "we work in the earth's night, 3000 leagues under the ground."

"Yipes," says Vincent.

"*Down there*," intones Big Chas/John repetitiously, clacking his sewerman boots.

"Holy smoke," says Vincent, "can I go?"

"Be here at 4 AM tomorrow morning," growls Big Chas/John, spits then does a Mephistopheles ...

The Water Hole

Next day everyone shuffled off through the slagheaps to the Kaliban and Batz diggings at pit number 4, an abandoned mine which opened into a lopsided structure that had been written off William of Orange's books. The ground floor contained a locker-room where the small props were being kept and some stairs led up to the mine-elevator which opened onto a long gallery.

Slate. It's four o'clock in the morning. Vincent surrenders his crook and admission token and in the Davyroom he's issued a boiled-leather rocket helmet and a miner's lamp.

Slate. This is no amusement park. Four by four the miners get in the Otis cages. Vincent gets in with Big Chas/John and two other party workers. Clink, clonk, queep, pocketa, pocketa, down we go, 3000 leagues down the rabbit hole. *Sous-sol:* moles, trolls, mules, kiddie-carts, bad lungs, drippy faucets and Charlie Parker with a bellows full of lampblack.

The lower depths were outside in cross section against a slagheap. From a distance it looked like a glassed-in anthill or a one-ball machine. The Cuesmes fire department had run hoses in and rigged up a fire sprinkler system to simulate the dripping coal. André got the whistle again, but those goofballs didn't know how to regulate the water pressure any better than the grips at St. Remy. Young was warned against using arc lights, but they were used anyway while a man with a gas counter paced nervously up and down the

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set. Minnelli and Charlie Parker, acting like the little people in La Folse prints of the temptation of St. Anthony, went around with the bellows and got the miners. Most of them were real McCoys that Kaplan had taken off pension.

Slate (April 1879). Lead kindly lamp. Vincent and Big Chas/John L. start crawling through the armoire: Follow-the-leader, leap-frog and locomotive. Vincent—the old sugar beetle—says Gee, you've got little children working here! Virgil Big Chas/John spits and says You ain't see nottin' yet, kiddo. How old is that one? asks Vincent, pointing to a little girl. Big Chas/John says None of that, you, and tugs him along.

On they go through the coalbin, stooping and crawling under the leaky taps. They pass a makeshift grotto with a Madonna lashed to a mine prop. The kids are pulling coal carts back and forth. A blind mule train comes by. Vincent, wide-eyed, takes it all in. Big Chas/John tweaks his ear and repeats You ain't seen nottin' yet, spits and indicates a hole in the floor.

Doubledarers go first, says Vincent, and Big Chas/John starts down. Don't step on my fingers, he says, and don't slip, alstublieft!

Vincent follows him down, down, down and they reach what's the inner circle of this inferno. There's a hole in the wall where we'd expect to find Injun Joe, but instead there's four miners in prone positions picking away at the slagheap. More greedy little kids are dragging tons of the precious stuff out in sacks. Tilt! Vincent sees red. His own greedy face seems to say There should be a law.

Vincent has given up his cosmopolitan ways and taken up pickings with the miners. *Slate.* We find him being a good neighbor, climbing the slagheaps beating the old women out of arrowheads. Hark! What's that hooting mean? The arc lights in pit number 4!

Young, beaming crazily, had his camera up on a 20¹ parallel for the accident. The miners' wives, Vincent and other curiosity seekers come clopping down the slagheaps and beeline for the mine shaft.

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The smoke pots were going full blast but there wasn't enough smoke. 'I want smoke!" cried Minnelli, skipping slag in a puddle. A switch-engine was pulled up behind the slagheap. Plenty of smoke.

At the mine shaft the cages are coming up with survivors who are carried off in hand-woven baskets. The pensioneers are weeping, really weeping. Good lord, Big Chas/John killed! Then up comes a cage bearing a human cinderman (pink paint, Delsey tissue, coal dust, Lady Esther, glue in the hair and a final puff with the bellows). It's ghastly, visual and unforgettable. Even the miners get out of the way as the cage door is opened.

Slate. (Green Dolphin Street in Cuesmes.) We go looking for Vincent and discover him clothed in rags and patches rooting for truffles or something around the lowly door of his *cabanon.* It's an object lesson on the artistic life. He finds a kettle—what luck!—and gets so excited he bumps his head going in the door.

Slate. The Dover Mail comes galloping down the street. (It was Kaplan who sprinkled the cobbles.) Théo clambers out of the carriage and knocks off his Homburg going in the door.

The Dover Mail dashes off, does a U-turn, and cobbles are resprinkled and here comes the Dover Mail again. The door pops open and out spring Abraham's angels—three heavily cloaked, conspiratorial gents from the Evangelical Investigation Committee. *They* should bump *their* heads. They do.

The 19th Hole

The Evangelical school and the inside of van Gogh's hut still had to be shot in the studio in Brussels, but because part of the company was no longer needed it was decided that before shooting the final scenes a farewell tea and sympathy party should be held in the People's House. Martinis, scotch and slag sandwiches were passed out and Producer Houseman showed up to thank the crew bilingually for an extremely satisfactory job. *Lust For Life* had all the earmarks of a great picture. Next Minelli got on a parallel and personally thanked the crew for what he thought

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a job well done. *Lust For Life* was a crackerjack lulu. He also thought he'd go to Mexico when *Lust For Life* was finished and rest a bit. Then Young got up and told everyone how they were a smashing good crew and how he was sure *Lust For Life* was a jackercrack lulu and certainly would captivate millions. Then Minnelli got up again and thanked Freddy to whom a lot of the credit should go if *Lust For Life* were a success (screen credit for Director of Photography would actually go to Mr. Arnold in Culver City). Young begged off but Minnelli insisted; Young seemed ready to bite a piece out of his teacup, but the crew saved the day by giving a Hip-Hip-Horray for each of them: Minelli, Young and Mr. Houseman. Mr. Houseman was true-blue and really a gentleman, and so was Minnelli and so was Young, and Kirk—gosh, what an actor. If van Gogh hadn't lived, it would have been necessary to invent him so Kirk could play that role. Ezra Pound *couldn't* have done it better.

In the Locker Room

In the Brussels studio the Evangelical school and van Gogh's hut stood together like the weaver's hut and potato eaters' shack in Amsterdam. About nine old men were sitting behind a green pool table in the Evangelical school.

Slate. An apprentice-evangelicist enters and the burgomeisters tell him he passed his trial period. The personable pupil gets his assignment and goes out beaming. The PTA falls into consultation about the next candidate, Mr. Vincent van Gogh. Says M. DeLeer, one of the judges, in a long goofed-up filibuster: Well, I tried to teach this young Vincent the most elementary steps of preaching but to no avail. This young Vincent is absolutely incapable of speaking *extemporare...*

Rick-ticky-ticky-tick. Enter this young Douglas in his Eton suit, but his meek and winning eye doesn't get him anywhere.

"You goofed," says the board, then Sousas out, leaving Vincent to slink away into the courtyard flubbing his ear. But Victoria's messenger, the good padre Pietersen, calls him

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back. Vincent falls all over himself. The padre gives him a reassuring pat and says, Sonny, see this map? See Mons there? Well right there's le Borinage, hell's pantry—thousands of nice yellow oil lamps, piles of slag to be made, etc. Dissolve...

Slate. Inside his Skid Row *cabanon*, Silas van Guck, still dazed from bumping his head on the door, is putting away his kettle find—Never can tell when you'll need such things for a still life. Clippity-clop, the Dover Mail crunches up on the driveway. Théo ducks in (dialogue left for Culver City) and ducks out again.

Slate. Clippity-clop, more visitors. It's the cloakroom delegation from Evangelist Prep. Quick, hide the sketches, hide the kettle ... Oh! Hi there. Howdy. Have a welcome lamp. Brought some blankets?

Blankets?

Blankets. Hadn't you heard? Another beastly explosion in P number 4. Terrible thing. Terrible thing. What paper do you read anyhow?

Enough of that, Mr. Po Gogh, show us your bed! O, gave it away, did you? Then where's your ear? O, gave that away too, did you! Vincent, the jig's up. You've disgraced your hairshirt, and moreover, you're padding your expense account again; we're sorry, of course, but we've got to let you go.

Impossible!

"That's it!" from Minnelli. "Lily and freeze it."

An earsplitting tri-lingual roar was loosed from the bedraggled crew. Van Gogh's *cabanon* was torn down lickety split and packaged for air-mail back to Culver City. Everyone shook their watches.

Impossible? Was it only nine weeks ago that van Gogh seemed to echo "Impossible" through the ears of wheat near Auvers-sur-Oise? But it had been possible. Who would have thought it? Just nine weeks ago the quarry had been treed at Auvers and now the outdoors scavenger hunt was over. Vincent's love life and the inside scenes in the little yellow house, the presbytery, Mauves' studio and the trailer all still

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had to be done back in Culver City, but the European reels had come full circle.

The grips were all packed and saying so long to each other. The horns were still. Freddy Young was awarded the ear for his part in the kill and Minnelli was given the taillight of Douglas's trailer. Other principals were given copies of Claude's sketches, autographed by the potato eaters.

Impossible? If you closed your eyes, you could just about see the letters going up on theater marquees from coast to coast, in big towns with little theaters and little towns with big ones—

CinemaScope in Color—Original Version

K K OU LA
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Epilogue:

Lust For Life turned out to be just over two hours long and had what was probably its European preview on a Monday night, November 12, 1956 at the SHAPE theater, on the banks of the Seine at Le Pecq, France. About one hundred and fifty GI's, their maids and dependents attended, paying an admission price of 25 cents in military payment certificates. There was only one showing, and the audience went in with almost no idea of what the movie was about.

The reactions were mixed. Nobody seemed enthusiastic; nobody seemed let-down; nobody was unaffected. The group attitude of the audience was of embarrassed or intimidated awe, mixed with pleasure and up-manship.

The next night, Tuesday, the film was shown at the SHAPE theater in tiny camp Voluceau near Versailles. It was shown twice during the evening—at 18:30 and 20:30. The 20:30 audience was largest and consisted again for the most part of GI's, Embassy employees, Government workers' dependents and their help.

A rundown of this audience's response follows:

Biggest laughs:

When Theo points to Vincent's sheepskin jacket and says, "And take that thing off."

When Theo tries to convince Vincent of the advantages of Paris.

When Gauguin says, "I mean *women*, man."

When Gauguin smells the soup and says, "A little heavy on the turpentine, isn't it?"

When van Gogh outshouts Gauguin in their big argument and says, "You look too fast!"

When Gauguin outshouts van Gogh by the canal and says, "That's the way I see it: Flat!"

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Most tension:

When Douglas looks at himself in the mirror before cutting his ear off.
When he leans on the apple tree.

Other response:

When the museum credits roll by in the beginning. (Uneasiness)

When Vincent asks DeCrucq how old the eleven-year old girl is working in the mine. (Cry of "Jailbait!" and scattered laughter)

When Charlie Parker's human clinker comes out of the mine shaft. (Respectful silence)

When he pays only 8 francs for his hotel room in Arles. (Bronx cheers)
When he opens his shutters on Mr. Arnold's 8 × 10's. (Wonderment)

When Theo's wife appears for the first time. (Whistling)

When Roulin 'settles' Vincent's bar debt at 70 cents to a dollar and tells the proprietor to shut up. (Approval)

When Gauguin blows into the little yellow house. (Quickening of interest)
When Gauguin knees the Zouave. (Approval)

When van Gogh and Gauguin enter the brothel. (General hilarity, heightened when the owner says to Gauguin "I don't want any trouble out of *you*.")

When the two artists get drunk. (Approval)

When Gauguin is mashing up pigment with a mortar and pestle. (Murmurs of lay curiosity)

When van Gogh is in bed after cutting his ear off (frightened silence) and the inspector announces that he cut his ear off (remark: "I told you so, honey.")

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When Vincent is shown to his cell and André screams at him. (Laughter)

When the nun enters Vincent's cell. (Whistle)

When Vincent goes to the apple tree and pulls out a gun. (Whisper: "He's going to kill himself.")

When the peasant driving the cart hears the shot. (Unmistakeable wave of relief)

When Vincent reappears in bed, smoking a pipe. (Unaccountable murmurs, whispering, and isolated laughter)

When he says, "I want to go home," then dies. (One noseblow)

When Mr. Arnold's camera taxis slowly back from the wheatfield near the asylum with its solitary reaper working under the sun, and van Gogh's voice is heard carefully explaining to the nun that it's a happy death, with the fields all golden under the sun...

(shuffling of feet, thumping back of seat cushions and struggling with greatcoats and Ike jackets)

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ST. JEROME

I watch like a praying mantis
In the dawn of the day of the world,
My fingers are knotted like bamboo-shoots,
My toe-nails ingrowing and curled.

My spirit is clothed in my body
Tight as a fist in a glove
And it climbs with a muscular vigour
The rungs of the ladder of love.

My wisdom is thorny and twisted
And hard as the questions of God,
My toe-nails dig into the footprints
Which mark where my Maker has trod.

My fingers are pulling asunder
The chinks in the fissures of doom
And I peer and see my own embryo
Swell in the dark of the womb.

I wind the seasons around me
Like wool on the joints of my thumb,
The planets are spinning about me
Like peas on the skin of a drum.

I watch with my Maker in watching
And fast in the place where He prayed,
I can match Him in spiritual wrestling—
And this is what makes me afraid.

—DONALD GARDNER

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GREEN SICKNESS

Jack Crack
took his palette to Paris
and writing his friends
"Enfin! j'ai trouvé mon propre style"
painted again and again the same picture,
as if a pregnancy
could be indefinitely prolonged.

IN LIEU OF AN ALBA

Don't worry, Patricia,
about being forgotten:
you have left stray hairs
around, like a shedding cat;
even years from now
we will be pulling them off our suits
or gagging because they lodge
back of the tongue.

ESSAY ON METER

The delicate foot of
Phoebe Isolde Farmer
taps measures acceptable to, among others, the
*** Poetry Journal and the
University of *** *** Review and to
her brother, a minister, who is paying
for the printing of a small
volume—while he should be
praying, "Lord, grant her
wings."

—BERNARD KEITH

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WORTH

Leaves when she wants, sorry bitch,
Said the white man, presuming to judge.
His mustache hid flakes of the itch,
But his faith, unimpaired, would not budge
Past the image he held, like a crab,
Of his dwindling soul far from home.
This age a man's got to grab.
The old days a bead or a comb
D've kept her at my feet half the night.
He ground rotten teeth and he frowned
As the moon showed clean light on the ground.

—MATTHEW CARNEY

THOUGHTS BY THE FIRE

A smile shrinks in the continual rains.
The cat stretches without opening his eyes.
The searches for interest begin, centrifugal
Journeys without souvenir through random tracts:
1750, the psychology of plants,
Choreographies of boredom, names of Greeks
Cut by Axe the son of Noman on a shin
At Abu Simbel, under water, Memnon singing
Every dawn: "but there it's always sunny."
I scissor silhouettes of my wife yawning.
Languages WANTED, by schizomacaronic.
And farther back a still school-room resounds:
Energy cannot be created or destroyed.

—ALISTAIR ELLIOT

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TWO POEMS

by

Philip Levine

WHO ARE YOU

It's morning; you are six
Impatient to be off
In the clear cold light
Of the second week in March.

I'm your father in
Whose grasp you can't hold still.
Your brother calls; it's time
To leave for Kindergarten,

But I must wax your cow lick,
Brush your hair down,
Button your starched collar
And make sure you have your folder.

I let you go a mess
Knowing that you'll cry
If he should call again.
I am left alone

Hearing the front door close,
You and your older brother
Setting off together
Across the wet lawns.

Where will you arrive?
And will I know you then
Blue eyed and American?
"Grandma is Jewish," you said

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At Christmas time. What will
You say to me when you
Are taunted as a Jew?
Or do they do such things

In the new glass school?
As though they ever stop.
It's 9; the buzzer sounds;
Miss Jennings has you now.

You stand beside your desk,
Pledge your flag and sing
Slightly out of tune
"For spacious fields of grain."

Are you of my people
Punished for their God?
You'd answer laughing, "Here
Is the church, there is the steeple."

You live for Easter now,
With colored eggs and bunnies,
Everyone's vacation,
And Sunday brings the funnies.

Wondering who you are,
Wondering what unknown fathers
Have reached through me to you,
I turn to the cold mirror

To see your face in mine,
My father's face as well,
As well as I remember.
Marked with the Mark of Cain

Somewhere beyond the flood
We wandered hand in hand
In a country we remember
Somewhere in our blood,

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Homeless we three and certain
Of who we were. Your face
Is older now you are
No longer here, your hair

Is darker and your eyes
Are wide and full with tears
And your father is
Your father and no more.

PASSING OUT

The Doctor fingers my bruise.
"Magnificent," he says, "black
at the edges and purple
cored." Seated he spies for clues,
gingerly probing the slack
flesh, while I, standing faced, pull

for air, losing the battle.
Faced by his aged diploma,
the heavy head of the x-
ray, and the iron saddle,
I grow lonely. He finds my
secrets common and my sex

neither objectionable
nor lovely, though he is on
the hunt for significance.
The shelved cutlery twinkles
behind glass, and I am on
the way out, "an instance

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of the succumbed through extreme
fantasy." He is alarmed
at last, and would raise me, but
I am floorward in a dream
of lowered trousers, unarmed
and weakly fighting to shut

the window of my drawers.
There are others in the room,
voices of women above
white oxfords; and the old floor,
the friendly linoleum,
departs. I whisper, "my love,"

and am safe, tabled, sniffing
spirits of ammonia
in the land of my fellows.
"Open house!" my openings
sing: pores, nose, anus let go
their charges, a shameless flow

into the outer world;
and the ceiling, equipped with
intelligence, surveys my
produce. The Doctor is thrilled
by my display, for he is half
the slave of necessity;

I, enormous in my need,
justify his sciences.
"We have alternatives," he
says: "Removal..." (And my blood
whitens as on their dull trays
the tubes dance. I must study

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the dark bellows of the gas
machine, the painless maker.)
"...and learning to live with it."
Oh, but I am learning fast
to live with any pain, ache,
growth to keep myself intact;

and in imagination
I hug my bruise like an old
Pooh Bear, already attuned
to its moods. "Oh, my dark one,
tell of the coming of cold
and of Kings, ancient and ruined."

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFEDERATE ARISTOCRACY

Too many domes of colored ass
Stained the white radiance.

A WINTRY FEVER

It's getting harder to remember the Thirties.
Public gestures are so replacing private embraces
That, thinking back, I can visualize old Cactus Jack
Garner better than some of the sunburned faces

Of girls I once thought I wanted to marry.
It's all very sad, this furious emptying
Of musty privacy which will finally leave
Only tundras of starlit history.

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I can say: "We stood this way on some day."
But which of three hundred and sixty-five?
Summer or winter? Mostly, I can't remember—
I can remember we were very much alive

One winter when all West Tennessee was glazed
With ice that crystalled the trees and caked the roofs.
Gullies in the creeks grew wider that year
When April came and the banks sloughed off.

That year my sister made love with my uncle,
And that year the Depression started to abate;
The year we burbled "Love in Bloom"
Was the year I learned really to love and hate.

And I stored memories in vaulted places
Along with scenes from movies, books and plays;
Then, gradually, I lost the bodies, then the faces;
Now only shadows move behind those glazed

Windows, as iced-over West Tennessee fades
Behind terraces where Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire
Still dance, almost in focus, and only slowly recede
Into snow that sequins the starlit air.

—JAMES CAMP

ROUTE 40—OHIO, U.S.A.

It is dark now.
Nets of snow
tumble about us.
We slide like fish,
the road dissolving.
And in the fields
the farmlights chant:
You have no land—
You have no land.

—MILTON KESSLER

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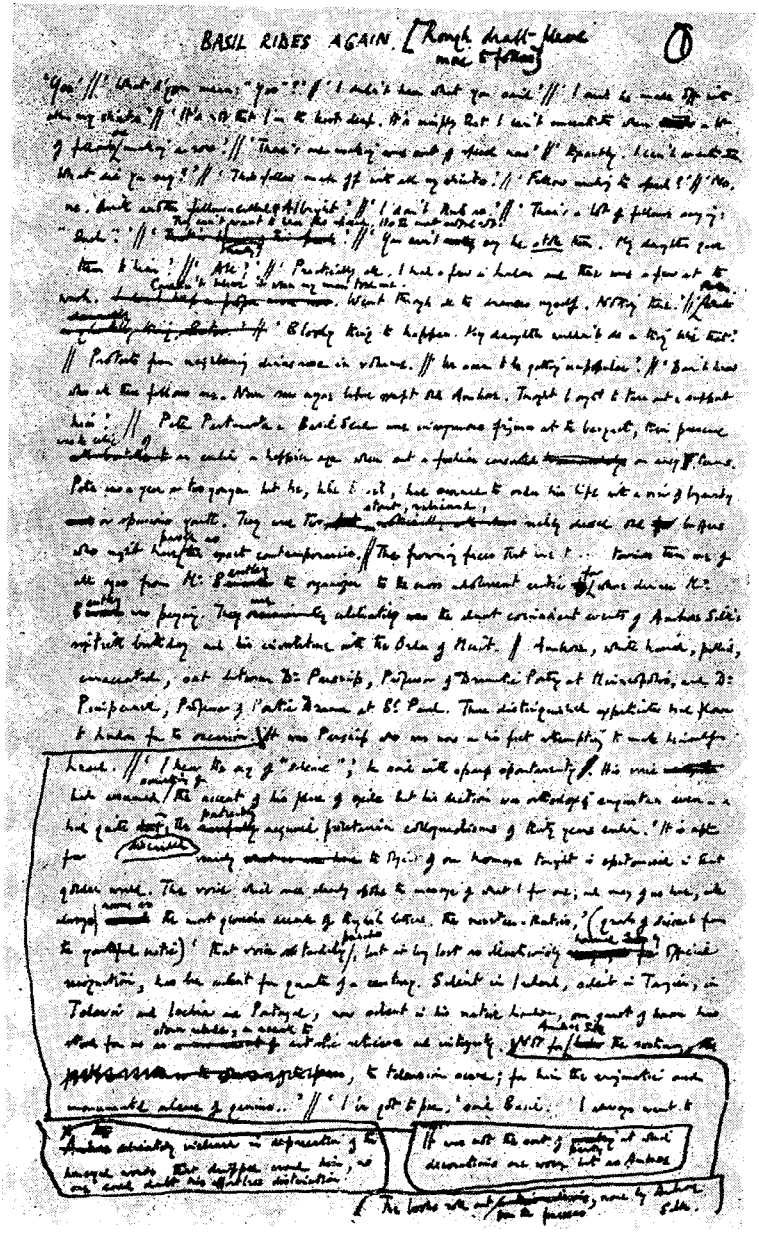
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Evelyn Waugh, MS from a work in progress, page one.

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THE ART OF FICTION XXX

EVELYN WAUGH

An Interview

The interview which follows is the result of two meetings on successive days at the Hyde Park Hotel, London during April 1962.

I had written to Mr. Waugh earlier asking permission to interview him and in this letter I had promised that I should not bring a tape-recorder with me. I imagined, from what he had written in the early part of The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold *that he was particularly averse to them.*

We met in the hall of the hotel at three in the afternoon. Mr. Waugh was dressed in a dark blue suit with a heavy overcoat and a black homburg hat. Apart from a neatly tied small brown paper parcel he was unencumbered. After we had shaken hands and he had explained that the interview would take place in his own room, the first thing he said was:

"Where is your machine?"

I explained that I hadn't brought one.

"Have you sold it?" he continued as we got into the lift. I was somewhat nonplussed. In fact I had at one time owned a tape recorder and I had indeed sold it three years earlier, before going to live abroad. None of this seemed very relevant. As we ascended slowly, Mr. Waugh continued his cross questioning about the

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machine. How much had I bought it for? How much had I sold it for? Whom did I sell it to?

"Do you have short-hand, then?" he asked as we left the lift. I explained that I did not. "Then it was very foolhardy of you to sell your machine, wasn't it?"

He showed me into a comfortable, soberly furnished room, with a fine view over the trees across Hyde Park. As he moved about the room he repeated twice under his breath: "The horrors of London life! The horrors of London Life."

"I hope you won't mind if I go to bed," he said, going through into the bathroom. From there he gave me a number of comments and directions:

"Go and look out of the window. This is the only hotel with a civilised view left in London... Do you see a brown paper parcel? Open it, please."

I did so.

"What do you find?"

"A box of cigars."

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes. I am smoking a cigarette now."

"I think cigarettes are rather squalid in the bedroom. Wouldn't you rather smoke a cigar?"

He re-entered, wearing a pair of white pyjamas and metal rimmed spectacles. He took a cigar, lit it and got into bed.

I sat down in an armchair at the foot of the bed, juggling note-book, pen and enormous cigar between hands and knees.

"I shan't be able to hear you there. Bring up that chair." He indicated one by the window, so I rearranged my paraphernalia as we talked of mutual friends. Quite soon he said, "When is the inquisition to begin?"

I had prepared a number of lengthy questions—the reader will no doubt detect the shadows of them in what follows— but I soon discovered that they did not, as I had hoped, elicit long or ruminative replies. Perhaps what was most striking about Mr. Waugh's conversation was his command of language: his spoken sentences are as graceful, precise and rounded as his written sentences. He never faltered, nor once gave the impression of searching for a word.

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The answers he gave to my questions came without hesitation or qualification, and any attempt I made to induce him to expand a reply generally resulted in a rephrasing of what he had said before.

I am well aware that the result on the following pages is unlike the majority of interviews which have appeared in this magazine; first it is very much shorter and secondly it is not, in the phrase of the editors, "an interview in depth". Personally I believe that Mr. Waugh does not lend himself, either as a writer or a man, to the form of delicate psychological probing and self analysis which have been the characteristic of many of the previously printed interviews. He would consider impertinent an attempt publicly to relate his life and his art, as was demonstrated conclusively when he appeared in an English television programme, Face To Face, *some time ago and parried all such probing with brief, flat and, wherever possible, monosyllabic replies.*

However, I should like to do something to dismiss the mythical image of Evelyn Waugh as an ogre of arrogance and reaction. Although he has carefully avoided taking part in the market place of literary life, of conferences, prize-giving and reputation-building, he is, none the less, both well informed and decided in his opinions about his contemporaries and juniors. Throughout the three hours I spent with him he was consistently helpful, attentive and courteous, allowing himself only minor flights of ironic exasperation if he considered my questions irrelevant or ill-phrased.

INTERVIEWER

Were there attempts at other novels before *Decline and Fall?*

WAUGH

I wrote my first piece of fiction at seven. *The Curse of the Horse Race.* It was vivid and full of action. Then, let's see, there was *The World to Come*, written in the metre of Hiawatha. When I was at school I wrote a five thousand word novel about modern school life. It was intolerably bad.

INTERVIEWER

Did you write a novel at Oxford?

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WAUGH

No. I did sketches and that sort of thing for the *Cherwell*, and for a paper Harold Acton edited—*Broom* it was called. The *Isis* was the official undergraduate magazine: it was boring and hearty, written for beer drinkers and rugger players. The *Cherwell* was a little more frivolous.

INTERVIEWER

Did you write your life of Rossetti at that time?

WAUGH

No. I came down from Oxford without a degree, wanting to be a painter. My father settled my debts and I tried to become a painter. I failed as I had neither the talent nor the application—I didn't have the moral qualities.

INTERVIEWER

Then what?

WAUGH

I became a prep school master. It was very jolly and I enjoyed it very much. I taught at two private schools for a period of nearly two years and during this I started an Oxford novel which was of no interest. After I had been expelled from the second school for drunkeness I returned penniless to my father. I went to see my friend Anthony Powell who was working with Duckworths, the publishers, at the time and said, "I'm starving". (This wasn't true: my father fed me). The director of the firm agreed to pay me fifty pounds for a brief life of Rossetti. I was delighted as fifty pounds was quite a lot then. I dashed off and dashed it off. The result was hurried and bad. I haven't let them reprint it again. Then I wrote *Decline and Fall*. It was in a sense based on my experiences as a schoolmaster, yet I had a much nicer time than the hero.

INTERVIEWER

Did *Vile Bodies* follow on immediately?

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WAUGH

I went through a form of marriage and travelled about Europe for some months with this consort. I wrote accounts of these travels which were bundled together into books and paid for the journeys, but left nothing over. I was in the middle of *Vile Bodies* when she left me. It was a bad book, I think, not so carefully constructed as the first. Separate scenes tended to go on for too long—the conversation in the train between those two women, the film shows of the dotty father.

INTERVIEWER

I think most of your readers would group these two novels closely together. I don't think that most of us would recognise that the second was the more weakly constructed...

WAUGH *(briskly)*

It was. It was second-hand too. I cribbed much of the scene at the customs from Firbank. I popularized a fashionable language, like the Beatnik writers today, and the book caught on.

INTERVIEWER

Have you found that the inspiration or starting-point of each of your novels has been different? Do you sometimes start with a character, sometimes with an event or circumstance? Did you for example think of the ramifications of an aristocratic divorce as the centre of *A Handful of Dust*, or was it the character of Tony and his ultimate fate which you started from?

WAUGH

I wrote a story called *The Man Who Liked Dickens*, which is identical to the final part of the book. About two years after I had written it, I became interested in the circumstances which might have produced this character; in his delirium there were hints of what he might have been like in his former life, so I followed them up.

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INTERVIEWER

Did you return again and again to the story in the intervening two years?

WAUGH

I wasn't haunted by it, if that's what you mean. Just curious. You can find the original story in a collection got together by Alfred Hitchcock.

INTERVIEWER

Did you write these early novels with ease or...

WAUGH *(cutting in)*

Six weeks work.

INTERVIEWER

Including revisions?

WAUGH

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

Do you write with the same speed and ease today?

WAUGH

I've got slower as I grew older. *Men at Arms* took a year. One's memory gets so much worse. I used to be able to hold the whole of a book in my head. Now if I take a walk whilst I am writing, I have to hurry back and make a correction, before I forget it.

INTERVIEWER

Do you mean you worked a bit every day over a year, or that you worked in concentrated periods?

WAUGH

Concentrated periods. Two thousand words is a good day's work.

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INTERVIEWER

E. M. Forster has spoken of "flat characters and round characters"; if you recognise this distinction, would you agree that you created no "round" characters until *A Handful of Dust?*

WAUGH

All fictional characters are flat. A writer can give an illusion of depth by giving an apparently stereoscopic view of a character—seeing him from two vantage points; all a writer can do is give more or less information about a character, not information of a different order.

INTERVIEWER

Then do you make no radical distinction between characters as differently conceived as Mr. Prendegast and Sebastian Flyte?

WAUGH

Yes I do. There are the protagonists and there are characters who are furniture. One gives only one aspect of the furniture. Sebastian Flyte was a protagonist.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say, then, that Charles Ryder was the character about whom you gave most information?

WAUGH

No, Guy Crouchback. (*A little restlessly*). But look, I think that your questions are dealing too much with the creation of character and not enough with the technique of writing. I regard writing not as investigation of character, but as an exercise in the use of language, and with this I am obsessed. I have no technical psychological interest. It is drama, speech and events that interest me.

INTERVIEWER

Does this mean that you continually refine and experiment?

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WAUGH

Experiment? God forbid! Look at the results of experiment in the case of a writer like Joyce. He started off writing very well, then you can watch him going mad with vanity. He ends up a lunatic.

INTERVIEWER

I gather from what you said earlier that you don't find the act of writing difficult.

WAUGH

I don't find it easy. You see there are always words going round in my head; some people think in pictures, some in ideas. I think entirely in words. By the time I come to stick my pen in my ink pot these words have reached a stage of order which is fairly presentable.

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps that explains why Gilbert Pinfold was haunted by voices—by disembodied words.

WAUGH

Yes, that's true—the word made manifest.

INTERVIEWER

Can you say something about the direct influences on your style? Were any of the nineteenth century writers an influence on you. Samuel Butler, for example?

WAUGH

They were the basis of my education, and as such of course I was affected by reading them. P. G. Wodehouse affected my style directly. Then there was a little book by E. M. Forster called *Pharos and Pharillon*—sketches of the history of Alexandria. I think that Hemingway made real discoveries about the use of language in his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. I admired the way he made drunk people talk.

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INTERVIEWER

What about Ronald Firbank?

WAUGH

I enjoyed him very much when I was young. I can't read him now.

INTERVIEWER

Why?

WAUGH

I think there would be something wrong with an elderly man who could enjoy Firbank.

INTERVIEWER

Who do you read for pleasure?

WAUGH

Anthony Powell. Ronald Knox, both for pleasure and moral edification. Erle Stanley Gardner.

INTERVIEWER

And Raymond Chandler!

WAUGH

No. I'm bored by all those slugs of whiskey. I don't care for all the violence either.

INTERVIEWER

But isn't there a lot of violence in Gardner?

WAUGH

Not of the extraneous lubricious sort you find in other American crime writers.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of other American writers, of Scott Fitzgerald or William Faulkner for example?

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WAUGH

I enjoyed the first part of *Tender is The Night*. I find Faulkner intolerably bad.

INTERVIEWER

It is evident that you reverence the authority of established institutions—for the Catholic Church and the Army. Would you agree that on one level both *Brideshead Revisited* and the army trilogy were celebrations of this reverence?

WAUGH

No, certainly not. I reverence the Catholic Church because it is true, not because it is established or an institution. *Men At Arms* was a kind of uncelebration, a history of Guy Crouchback's disillusion with the army. Guy has old fashioned ideas of honour and illusions of chivalry; we see these being used up and destroyed by his encounters with the realities of army life.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that there was any direct moral to the Army trilogy?

WAUGH

Yes, I imply that there is a moral purpose, a chance of salvation, in every human life. Do you know the old protestant hymn which goes:

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide

Guy is offered this chance by making himself responsible for the upbringing of Trimmer's child, to see that he is not brought up by his dissolute mother. He is essentially an unselfish character.

INTERVIEWER

Can you say something about the conception of the trilogy. Did you carry out a plan which you had made at the start?

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WAUGH

It changed a lot in the writing. Originally I had intended the second volume, *Officers and Gentlemen*, to be two volumes. Then I decided to lump them together and finish it off. There's a very bad transitional passage on board the troop ship. The third volume really arose from the fact that Ludovic needed explaining. As it turned out each volume had a common form because there was an irrelevent ludicrous figure in each to make the running.

INTERVIEWER

Even if, as you say, the whole conception of the trilogy was not clearly worked out before you started to write, were there not some things which you saw from the beginning?

WAUGH

Yes, both the sword in the Italian church and the sword of Stalingrad were, as you put it, there from the beginning.

INTERVIEWER

Can you say something about the germination of *Brideshead Revisited?*

WAUGH

It is very much a child of its time. Had it not been written when it was, at a very bad time in the war when there was nothing to eat, it would have been a different book. The fact that it is rich in evocative description—in gluttonous writing—is a direct result of the privations and austerity of the times.

INTERVIEWER

Have you found any professional criticism of your work illuminating or helpful? Edmund Wilson, for example?

WAUGH

Is he an American?

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

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WAUGH

I don't think what they have to say is of much interest, do you? I think the general state of reviewing in England is contemptible—both slovenly and ostentatious. I used to have a rule when I reviewed books as a young man never to give an unfavourable notice to a book I hadn't read. I find even this simple rule is flagrantly broken now. Naturally I abhor the Cambridge movement of criticism, with its horror of elegance and its members mutually encouraging uncouth writing. Otherwise, I am pleased if my friends like my books.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think it just to describe you as a reactionary?

WAUGH

An artist must be a reactionary. He has to stand out against the tenor of the age and not go flopping along; he must offer some little opposition. Even the great Victorian artists were all anti-Victorian, despite the pressures to conform.

INTERVIEWER

But what about Dickens, although he preached social reform he also sought a public image.

WAUGH

Oh, that's quite different. He liked adulation and he liked showing off. But he was still deeply antagonistic to Victorianism.

INTERVIEWER

Is there any particular historical period, other than this one, in which you would like to have lived?

WAUGH

The seventeenth century. I think it was the time of the greatest drama and romance. I think I might have been happy in the thirteenth century, too.

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INTERVIEWER

Despite the great variety of the characters you have created in your novels, it is very noticeable that you have never given a sympathetic or even a full scale portrait of a working class character. Is there any reason for this?

WAUGH

I don't know them, and I'm not interested in them. No writer before the middle of the nineteenth century wrote about the working classes other than as grotesques or as pastoral decorations. Then when they were given the vote certain writers started to suck up to them.

INTERVIEWER

What about Pistol... or much later, Moll Flanders and...

WAUGH (*cutting in*)

Ah, the criminal classes. That's rather different. They have always had a certain fascination.

INTERVIEWER

May I ask you what you are writing at the moment?

WAUGH

An autobiography.

INTERVIEWER

Will it be conventional in form?

WAUGH

Extremely.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any books which you would like to have written and have found impossible?

WAUGH

I have done all I could. I have done my best.

—JULIAN JEBB

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from

CRIES OF FLESH

AND STONE

Pietà, dove si ascolta
L'uomo che è solo con sé.
Giuseppe Ungaretti

AS NAKEDLY MY CHILDREN SING...

How distant
this hard bright terrain
that separates us

wordless always

O dazzling waste
of my days

ZERO DECIBEL

Attenuated to this null
drowned in blood dense flesh

wrecked here without voice

I have suffered
enough death

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ABANDONED QUARRY

Howled
to predatory quiet

Roaring
white
granite

WATER LILY

I know you
jagged white crown
corrupt
on this stream
iced
in the green swarming noon
of my stagnance
the double fatal still bloom
and your thick fleshy stem
steeped
in muck

Richard O'Connell

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VENETIAN ELEGY

When Lady Venus takes her leisure
A young man with a feathered cap
Is sometimes told to sit beside her
And sing, or play the lute, or flute,
One cultivates clouds, the other
Deeper cushioned accord, both suit
Her cooling hour unarrayed
As she settles back,
A modest hand upon her lap,
And listens, while the poor boy dotes
On other beauties than his notes,
But better than he knows, he sings:

"O love is Arabia curst by its heat
Or stagnant ships in a golden port,
But rained from heaven, love fulfilled
Is like the valleys unburdening
Restless streams to the sea,
That run from themselves, amorous,
Bed-ridden, and yet seeking space,
My music conspires with a wasted life,
But windows are wide, and Venice sumptuous.

"When the leopard day comes down to drink
And the fawn-coloured shadows hide,
Love is a port of ennui
Where Rudel sang before he died.
Ready the rigging, fabled the sails,
Yet all is chartered, the voyage lies here,
The best of beauty is not departure
But rather its art of preparation,
The parted curtain, the long gaze
Upon the valleys, whose troublesome
Streams to horizons rush for relief
And fall into bitter comfort. Wait,
But meanwhile I am autumn, leaf by leaf."

James Lovett

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DIARY OF A JUDGE

by Dante Troisi

'But I'm not guilty, said K. It's a mistake. Besides, how can a man be guilty? We're all men. True, said the priest: but that's how the guilty talk.'
Kafka, The Trial

The village is celebrating I don't know how many years of destruction. The band goes blaring by below my apartment. Among the crowd of youngsters following it I recognise someone who was tried about three weeks ago; he has a patch over his right eye and his cheek is pocked with barely healed scabs. A bomb went off in his house and he was tried for possession of arms. Many people here palliate their wretched lot by collecting shrapnel and equipment left over from the armies' long sojourn; apart from their lives, they risk imprisonment if found with shells and mines, which they dig up for the metal. The youth, his lips white on a scorched face, is joking with a friend who walks beside him and goes through the motions of conducting music, and is distinguished from the other youths around him only by his build. But when he sees me behind the window-pane he stops, and the smile dies on his face. Maintaining the hostile stare, he passes his hands over his face and I seem to hear the sound of tearing paper. And yet he had a mild sentence; a very few months' prison; I exerted myself to get him a mild sentence. Useless. The judgement was an abuse, an injustice, and now he belongs to those who will one day cast lots to decide who is to punish me.

I am sure to die a violent death. I do not know if this is an old thought, or if it came to me as one way of discouraging my wife from having another child; I live in fear and doubt

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she may be pregnant, and force myself to marshall reasons that might convince her, if she is, to take measures against it.

I had forgotten it was a holiday and have work to get through at the office.

It is a cloudy, windy morning; on the streets, despoiled with upturned stones and flanked by heaps of bricks and rubble, the dusty wind smells of masonry and of new buildings. It makes the streamers flap against the unplastered walls. The streamers are attached to balconies that have no railings and to cords suspended between the unfinished façades. The wind blows away the voices of the men, who seem always on the point of saluting, hand to their peasant's straw hat, and of the women, bending to prevent their skirts from billowing up; it distorts and carries off the notes of music with the scraps of public notices the children have torn away.

In the piazza is the bandstand, and on the bandstand the speaker, holding his cap; but soon he needs his hands to aid his words, and takes it off, consigning it to someone as a priest to his verger. Then, when all need their hands to applaud, the caps go flying off.

People are waiting for me, leaning against the corridor wall. Some of them rise when they see the brief-case under my arm, others when I enter the room near which they have been told to wait. The case concerns a thirty-five-year-old, olive-skinned woman; she wishes her husband, captured by the Germans during the retreat, to be declared dead. That way she can remarry. She doesn't know the advocate has told me of her intentions and with a modest air she sits down and lowers her eyes. She folds her hands in her lap and clutches a handkerchief, passing it over her eyes each time a witness, having told me that Andrea P. really has disappeared, turns to leave. She thinks this affliction helps hasten the proceedings.

One after another and in the same words the woman's compatriots repeat to me how one day in March the Germans 'stole' Andrea P. I write down the depositions and then ask

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them to sign, but most are illiterate, and shake their heads, not in the least ashamed; they are content to evade the responsibility which for them is implicit in putting name and surname on a piece of paper. The last one comes in, and I ask him his name; he doesn't answer. "He's dumb," the woman says. He is a tall, blond, robust young man, wearing a hip-length cape. "He's dumb but he was there, and he knows how to make himself understood," says the woman vivaciously, in sorrowful admiration. The young man gives a confirming nod, and sending out his hands from under the cape begins to make signs, during which I see the images evoked by his predecessors strangely reproduced in his eyes. Suddenly I interrupt him and tell him it doesn't matter, he can go; the woman looks after him and forgets to wipe her eyes.

The ceremony in the piazza has come to an end, and wisps of patriotic music reach our ears. We have lost the war in vain if they make use of the usual speeches in comemoration and the usual laurel wreaths. I have come to an end as well, and say so to the nearly-widowed. The nearly-widowed rises and stares a little at the documents, undecided whether to ask me for an explanation, but she fears I sympathise with the missing husband; she adjusts her shawl; her bosom distends her dress, as if her vitality were defying my silence.

As soon as I saw my wife on the street I went up to her convinced she was looking for me to say my suspicions were unfounded; and persuaded she came out for this reason I took pleasure in postponing the announcement, talking rapidly about the trip we would make in the summer, of the ring I want to give her, happy as if the fear of her pregnancy were dispelled. Until she looked at me and I realized I was mistaken.

I wait on the pavement for her to come out of the shop. The widow's advocate passes by and even though we stand still he keeps me respectfully to his right. He excuses himself loudly for his absence; he could not come down from the official grandstand. I tell him the dossier is ready, whereon he

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offers me a coffee, seeming with his stentorian voice to be ordering it already from the owner of the nearby café. I refuse, and to console me for the sacrifice he confides that the mute is the widow's fiancé; he shakes my hand, is sorry to go, but must find his client, who has not paid him.

Tuesday.

The woman is sitting on the first step, against the wall, but the rest of the space between herself and the bannister is occupied by a basket covered with a white cloth; she holds one arm stretched across the basket and the other bent round her knees. I ask her to let me come down; she does not seem to hear, and I ask again. She slowly turns her head until her pointed chin comes to rest on her shoulder, and lifts the lids of her deep blue eyes, the right, directly beneath me, wider open than the left. And still she does not move, as if I were far away and had not time enough to get to where she was. Thus I am able to recognise her, the wife of a prisoner sentenced a short while ago. I ask her please to move the basket. She lifts up the cloth and reveals dried figs, a piece of cheese, a wheel of bread and a packet of tobacco. She plunges in her fingers and overturns the articles to prove she has nothing hidden.

She believes permission to let her to her husband depends on me. She tried to obtain it the instant he came out of the court-room with a police-escort; they told her to wait and there she waited, even though the prison was far away. She comes from a village compared to which this is a city, but it seems to her that everyone in it is plotting against herself or her husband.

I remember an old man in prison-camp who used to wait at the gates every morning for the lorry which collected our rubbish; he would climb on the running-board and ride around hanging on to the doors and the windscreen. He would get down, steeped in refuse, when the lorry checked out at the gates; he jumped off and jumped marvellously and was not

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old except for his white hair. He would clean off the filth which the bumping about had flung on him and go back to the barracks at walking-pace. For the rest of the day he was a prisoner resigned to his lot.

Every evening I arrive at the station. The lamp-posts are shaped like the lanterns that hang from carts. The pools of light are mingled with shadows, clear at the paving-stones, less clear over grass and coal-dust. I walk alongside the tracks and at the point where they turn and bury themselves in the dark I sit down on a low stone wall. I wait for the train. And there are the lights; it moves straight on, far away from me, then all at once it turns, the wheels screech, jump and settle among the sparks and the driver seems only just to avoid me; the freight-cars repeat the manoeuver, sway and straighten. I listen to the clatter at the couplings, follow the red lights of the final freight-car which the darkness quickly extinguishes. The dogs stop barking; the silence, thrown into the sky by the uproar, descends again on the countryside.

This sensation of danger escaped, of flight and distance, helps me as the brief race on the lorry helped the old man.

It happens to convicts who have been in prison. The advocates in concluding their defence call the judges' attention to those circumstances which, according to them, ought to be considered in the client's favour. I look away and stare at the tiles on the floor; I tell myself it doesn't matter to me; they are people who have made mistakes and justice must be done. And I try to forget the day the old man died. I am the sentry now and the court-room is the tower from which I take my aim.

Thursday.

When we return from the council-chamber to the court I ring the bell. I go on ringing it when the door has been opened and while the two other judges are outside. Then I return to my high chair and the reading begins. They think it is a mania or an infantile caprice; if I persist, they look at me re-

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provingly, as if protracting the announcement diminished or disturbed the solemnity of the ceremony. It upsets the accused and his advocate who scan our faces for the outcome; the delay has in any case made them nervous. But for me postponing the reading is a protest, a cure to liberate me from complicity, a release from the concensus implied in the judgement. I extend my forefinger at the button and from there create confusion, anxiety, fear and contribute remorse, contempt and disbelief. A fine commingling that leaves me in the anguished exaltation of the gambler, the melancholy drunkard, the catholic sinner, with a vague ambiguous suspicion of hypocrisy.

I ring the bell as I would recite an act of contrition.

Saturday.

Today's last trial deals with Teresa Caporale. I hear the name distinctly. She is a woman of fifty and looks more; her white hair is drawn back in a large bun hidden by a kerchief with coloured squares; over her shoulders an identical kerchief, crossed round her breast and the ends tucked in the apron which covers the front of her long red dress. She has no defense, there is no advocate here; it is two o'clock. The usher goes out to look for one in the corridor, for according to the law the accused must be defended. An old advocate comes in with bad grace, stopped on his way home to lunch; however, he utters the ritual phrase: "at your service, gentlemen of the court."

The woman is accused of having offered resistance to a policeman trying to arrest her drunken son; she seized him by the neck and held on until he nearly suffocated. So much we gather from the brief and rapid summary by the president for Counsel for the Defence, who thanks him and begins to read the newspaper.

The woman murmurs, "it's not true," before her turn to speak.

The president to the registrar: "Accused confirms the interrogation."

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"It's not true," repeats the woman, more loudly. Without taking his eyes off his newspaper the advocate gestures her to be quiet and not disturb the court.

The president to the court officer: "the witnesses."

The first witness is the policeman.

The president: "say: I swear to tell the truth."

"I swear to tell the truth," says the policeman.

The president: "did the events occur as already described by you?"

The policeman: "yesyourhonor."

"You may step down. Next witness."

In come the second, third and fourth witnesses. They say, "I swear to tell the truth," and then, "yesyourhonor."

"That's the lot," calls the court officer.

Two policemen come in to take over from those on court duty since this morning, but they are superfluous, we have finished. In spite of which the old woman repeats again, "It's not true."

Counsel for the Prosecution gets up and asks briefly for a verdict of guilty with eight months' imprisonment. The advocate, with a faint bow: "I accept the mercy of the court."

We retire to the council-chamber. The president turns to the judge on his right, then leans across to me. "Yesyourhonor," I say. And he, taking up the documents as if reading from them, says rapidly, "Teresa Caporale found guilty and sentenced to four months' imprisonment."

It is ten past two. The advocate wakes up and asks the woman if she requires his assistance for the appeal; a different kind of assistance from today's, he insinuates. And then the old woman, full of trust, repeats again below him the incriminating gesture; she clasps his face between her hands like a mother with her son and implores him to tell the guards not to ruin her boy...

An advocate once asked a client if he would prefer being defended with the major or the minor codes, and showed him two tomes; his choice would influence the fee. And once when in the tumult of his declaration the accused stuck his

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dirty fingers on the presidential desk to emphasise his speech he was rudely interrupted and told to step three paces back; and lost the thread and did not continue.

The accused in court is so isolated as to be instantly recognised. Once invited to speak, he runs the risk of being taken out if over-exited in his own defence, of seeming repentent if confused, a dissembler if he weeps, of having learned his lesson from his advocate if he talks clearly; or he stands still, stupefied, gaping and staring at the wall behind the Bench, at the crucifix, at the device: "one law for all", which he may not even know how to read.

For a woman, the hardship is increased by the eyes that inspect the shape of her legs and the proportions of her breasts.

The accused should be made to don the legal gown as well. The usher should help him on with it, hiding rags or double-breasted suit, silk shirt or pallid flesh. Their hands which are never at rest (they hide them in their pockets until corrected by the president or the police) could in this way shake in the ample sleeves without further signs of guilt being attributed to such movement. An accused if clad like judge and advocate might instil respect in each of these who as it is pay him either no attention or only what is necessary to confirm the opinion they already have of him. They toss the accused across to each other on the assumption all is known about him. Perhaps in the gown, innocent or guilty, he might feel like those who defend him and those who judge him.

Otherwise that symbol serves uniquely to inculcate fear and to empty pockets.

I may have read it somewhere too but have already felt how solitude creates the need to kill. And to condemn is to kill. It may explain my endurance in this profession and my opposition to the new life now being nurtured within my wife. I have always worn a uniform and in uniform have always committed and suffered violence; the uniforms of soldier, prisoner, judge.

It is bad for me to live in C..., a village now being reborn of its own rubble, which it does not clear away.

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Thursday.

The H-Bomb exploded today, young man, but we condemn you just the same, even though you say you stole the wood to warm yourself. You might have been more easily acquitted if your case had not been called up last. Now it is late and we have little will to debate and so concur with the president, who has great respect for private property. And then in the brain crammed with images of extermination which the explosion evokes, your fate is no landmark.

I suspect I am the instrument of a vendetta, at times the vendetta of one man against another man, at times of the above-mentioned against the rest of mankind, unarmed.

Yesterday.

"I am twenty-five years old and live in the country, far from town. It is true that my father, who is fifty, came up to me while I was working in the tomato-field and took me by the arm; when I tried to get away he used force and kissed me several times. I begged him to stop but he continued holding me by the arm and kissing me, and then with his free hand he took off my dress. Frightened of what might happen I asked my father what he was trying to do. I do not remember what he replied, nor do I remember whether he pushed me against a rock in order to hold me better. I deny that during the said circumstances he deflowered me.

"This was the beginning of relations between myself and my father. The same scene and the same actions occurred on many other occasions, on the land and at home. The above-mentioned activities were broken off by my father several days before my marriage. After my marriage my father desired at all costs to have carnal relations with me; intercourse then took place many times. The first time was five days after the wedding; my husband was out on the land, I was in the house alone, my father arrived and closing the door held me to him; he pushed me on to the ground, climbed on

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top of me and drew up my dress and this time joined himself to me completely.

"Yes, I did remind him I was married and he should not touch me any more, because it was not good because of people and above all because of my husband who if he found out would do something terrible.

"No, I could not start calling in order to attract someone's attention partly because I was ashamed and partly because no one would have heard me.

"We had intercourse nearly every day. Every time I tried resisting he threatened me, saying he would make me dress in black like the Madonna and kill my husband. He often said that one night after drinking a bottle of wine he would come to the house and tell my husband all about it and if he didn't like it he would cut his throat. Knowing my father's character and to avoid rows and fights in the family, up till now I have always given in to his desires, against my will."

Tuesday.

A priest selects another priest to whom he may confess his sins and errors, resolve his doubts and after start to sin again, aided, clearly, by the prospect of cleansing himself when he wishes. And a priest can enjoy the singularity of his own position, read books exalting to him the beauty and necessity of his own ministrations, and even go to bed in his cassock and continue in his dreams delivering himself from temptation.

But we have no one and do not possess the power of mutual absolution, and all books only counsel us to refrain from judgement, nor is there any remedy in resolving to make no mistake the next time. And we cannot stay at home and eat and sleep in our gowns to hide the pangs of remorse. Our lot is to wait for the moment when remorse becomes professional pride.

After a certain period indeed it seems that judges can dispose of their remorse at will, like those plants which when

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pressed at certain points secrete a fluid. Then it gives no further pain and serves to justify oneself to others and to build up one's resistance to the job; and the pangs become an ornament, like the jingling fetishes African negroes wear on their arms and ankles.

Saturday.

Letter from Prisoner G. Z..., ex-student, ex-tank-officer.

"I don't know how long you waited for me at the rendezvous, Kurt; you will tell me in your next letter and I imagine that what with surprise and indignation at my treachery, you will write even worse than usual and make it still harder to understand what you say; my comrades often help me but so far I haven't found one who speaks German, and I suppose the really unreadable words are written in your own language. I hope you didn't share my fate in the café at Porta Romana, it happens easily, you know, even as I write my cell-mates are telling me so again. I'm not at yesterday's place, or even this morning's, it's already occupied, but perhaps the new man is willing to change; I'll ask him when I've finished.

"Well, listen to this, my Austrian friend. I woke up as on any other day; there was no hurry, there are plenty of trains to the city. It was already cold in the cell; I washed slowly and thoroughly; the guard had told me to leave and I almost asked if the soup was ready; I could have done with a plateful. I said goodbye to my cell-mates, handed back my prison things and went out. Here, once outside the prison you are on the street, among people and shops and offices; bicycles leaning against the wall, by the doorways, cars and again above all bicycles and I noticed straightaway how people watch over them less carefully than before, perhaps the owners feel safer. Kurt: you got out of your prison yesterday and so you know how it was for me, suddenly after eighteen months in a cell finding yourself among people; the people are there and not there, the voices hit you like a wind and it seems you can't control yourself, and your feet seem all at once to have swollen. I think we should leave a little at a time and not all at once

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with prison on your back and a crowded street and such a sun today I thought it wasn't winter for the townsfolk.

"Then I began walking and watching everything carefully, perhaps too carefully, because a jeweller grew suspicious and told me to clear off away from his window; I wanted to be indignant, but I couldn't. After a street—the trees are leafless here and I expect those at Porta Romana are the same—I went into a bar; it was empty except for a woman behind the counter; she was clean, not especially young but clean and healthy; I ordered a quarter of wine and had her bring it to me at a table, to see all of her; that way I was able to look at her legs in their woollen stockings and at her hips, and when she leaned over to set down the bottle and glass I spied at the neck of her dress. If she had questioned me I would have confessed having just got out of prison, sure of getting her friendship, she seemed so warm and maternal. But instead she kept quiet until she told me what I owed and I threw down the money desiring her hands while they closed round the coins; but I didn't take the chance and after drinking got up and left, resenting her. God, a prisoner should go to bed with a woman once a month at least; you must have done so, and imagine me after eighteen months without a taste of it, and who knows how long they will give me now; I'll become impotent, Kurt.

"Then I went out, intending to go to the station, which in this place is some way away, you have to cross the town; passing the prison again I stopped, of course; a door like so many other doors, and it has a bell, and one rings it, like a bell at any other door. I was tempted. My enthusiasm over our rendez-vous had dwindled. I was thinking about after the rendez-vous, I mean about what we should have done after telling each other about prison-life. Yes, I had addresses of people living there in the city, but one never knows whether such people are at home or not, or even whether they are not back inside, precisely where I met them, and in any case, we might have eaten and slept on them for days and then have had to help them; help them meaning begin all over again and end again in prison. There you are, Kurt,

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that's what I was thinking of as I dragged myself away from the door and went on into the crowd; that we lacked a direction, a path, a reason not to ring on the prison door again.

"And it seemed to me, my Austrian friend, that the people noticed me, I didn't know any of them and all of them knew me, by who knows what distinguishing marks. I stopped at the window of a shop with a strip of mirror to one side and looked at myself in it, but I saw no distinguishing marks, I wore no tie, my shirt-collar was open; I couldn't remember how I had been eighteen months before and couldn't tell how I had changed or what the prison had left me with. But listen to this, a long black stain was suddenly born in that mirror, it overtopped me head and shoulders, a peaked cap on its head and its hand on its pistol, a *carabiniere*, the same one of eighteen months ago, was standing behind me. Perhaps the jeweller had called him, for I had stopped there again; without turning I plunged back into the crowd, walking faster and faster, so much so that in its quiet and obstinate way it blocked my path. I was soon out of breath and stopped, waiting for a hand to thud down on my shoulder: "come along with us, my lad." I turned, there was no *carabiniere* and, as far as I could see, no black stain, yet still I wondered if he hadn't changed into plain clothes and then, nearby, I saw the same bar of a while ago, and went in.

"There were bicycles outside the door and people inside; the woman had her elbows on the counter. I was still feeling sick from the wine gulped down on an empty stomach, none the less I ordered a carafe standing and began to drink it there and then; it was cold and sharp and burned my stomach and came back bitter in the mouth. The woman stared at me suspiciously, I pretended to read the bottles lined up on the shelves at her back, my sight began to swim yet I told her I wanted more wine; she asked me if I had any cash and I answered yes violently, angry because the question proved she didn't trust me. She obeyed. I went on drinking and from then on was in a fog and the woman and the *carabiniere* became the same person intent on keeping me under observation. I felt crushed by the memory of those eighteen months,

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by the obligation to go to Porta Romana, by the memory of people who have a direction... I swallowed the wine and the woman stuck out her hand for money, I saw it shake impatiently, avid, and then I stopped myself from giving it to her. "I haven't any money," I said. And she, calm, unexcited: "you're a thief," she said, "a miserable thief." I was waiting for that, it was what I wanted. I began laughing. I said, "I have a bicycle, I'll leave you a bicycle on it." And still laughing I went outside and dragged in one of the bicycles propped against the wall.

"It wasn't very clever of me, Kurt; its owner was sitting at one of the tables; I could have pretended it was a joke, I had the money; instead I went on, swearing and shouting insults and threatening the woman, although I wasn't able to touch her; if only I could have touched her somewhere; I was in the kind of fury our Captain had liked and recommended, during the war, before an attack. This time there was no trench to fight for, I only needed to show the woman she had guessed right, she hadn't made a mistake. I wanted to go back into prison and I took the first opportunity.

"One of my cell-mates tells me it's raining outside; that's almost comforting; where should we have gone? Write to me, my address is as before. And if you discover you're on the point of doing something to get you back inside, come around near here and do it, and at least we'll meet in the same prison. Or is it already too late? If it isn't too late, comrade, I advise you to keep yourself clean; the war's been over more than a while now and it's time to be a civilian and not regret it with Hitler and Mussolini. Come and wait for me at the door and help me get out for good next time."

"P.S. Keep this letter. My advocate, if I have any money for one, can show it to the judges. The judges are doubtless unaware of how you can come back in again when your clothes don't even smell of the streets. Perhaps if they read me they'll sympathise. And who knows, there might be one of them with our political ideas."

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Last week.

The judges should be made to observe what happens in the court-room while the other judges are in the council-chamber. Once a month at least they should mingle with the crowd behind the low partition, watch the accused, the witnesses, the advocates; above all watch the accused when the bell rings to announce the Bench is returning to read the judgement. They would not forget the eyes on the crucifix or on Counsel for the Defence who might help them even yet, the hand on the shoulders of mother or wife, the expressions of trust and remorse, the silent promises to make amends.

"Report in connexion with the disappearance of a goose. One Piccirilli, Pasquale, presented himself announcing a goose belonging to him had vanished. Investigations conducted by Duty Constable have established that Piccirilli, attending the fair at B... in company with his sister Anna, acquired a goose. Towards fourteen-thirty hours Piccirilli, together with his sister, left B... in order to regain his own dwelling, travelling by way of the Provincial Highway leading from B... to T... The goose was carried by Piccirilli astride an ass. Anna having been left some way behind and Piccirilli wishing to get down from the saddle and repair to the public house and there drink a glass or two of wine, he requested a woman unknown to him and proceeding on foot in the same direction, temporarily to carry the goose, so that on drawing level with the public house he might descend in a fitting manner.

"Once on the ground, Piccirilli concerned himself no more with the woman bearing the goose. Making fast the ass with a piece of string he left it nearby and entered the public house. When a short while later his sister joined him there, she asked him where he had put the goose. Piccirilli, who was nearly drunk, addressed himself to those present, who of course were in no position to give details concerning the disappearance of the palmiped. He then recalled having personally entrusted the goose to a woman, and requested a bicycle, which he did not obtain. He therefore mounted the

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ass in pursuit of the unknown woman. His sister Anna engaged a boy to get on a bicycle and catch the woman. The boy complied with this request and caught up with the woman near Carvone Bridge, and addressing himself to the stranger told her to wait for the owner of the goose, which was in the traveller's possession.

"Having waited a few seconds, the woman allowed the goose to fall to the ground, and left. Seeing Piccirilli aroused by the fumes of the wine, astride an ass on the country road and bawling disconnected threatening language, the boy foresaw dangers unspecified and turning back left the goose on the road.

"Piccirilli, on reaching the place where the biped then was, rather than stopping, went on to catch the woman who should, in his judgement, answer for wrongful appropriation of the goose. When shortly afterwards he again passed by that spot, the goose had vanished. Without getting down from the saddle and ascertaining whether by chance the goose had not betaken itself to the neighbouring meadows, he made his way back to the public house where he declared having been robbed of the palmiped.

"From an on-the-spot effected by the Constable it has been established that there exists, beyond the bridge, at a distance of approximately thirteen yards and on the right of a person proceeding from B... to T... and one yard exactly from the wayside ditch, a hedge of thorns and of acacias. The leaves on the bush and the underlying grass were soaked in blood. A few goose feathers were noticed, scattered near the hedge.

"It is to be presumed that the biped, seeking refuge under the hedge, remained abandoned there until devoured by some carnivorous animal. In the case of further enquiries favouring such a decision, the present report will be continued."

I have eight years' experience; on an average, two penal sessions a week, at least five trials per session, are forty trials a month and make in eight years three thousand eight hundred and forty and, if I count two accused per trial, that makes about eight thousand people. And then thousands

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more in civil sessions. I balk at reckoning how many years of prison I have given or helped to give.

We are in the same position as the monks in the monastery on the hill, who wait for people to go and repent; and just as they know the city from the voices in the confessional, so we only glimpse moments of the life that rages round us. With the monks, the risk of losing their soul overcomes the temptation to flee the precincts; the fear of going out destitute and helpless into the world that shows us only its diseased side keeps us nailed to our post.

Deformed by sins and wickedness, we and they cultivate in solitude a useless pessimism; oppressed by the certainty there will always be sinners to climb the hill and fall on their knees and people accused to judge, we think of the next with passive indulgence, a carelessness moderated by the scruple of respect for the rules; at times with pain, in which, however, there is more of pity for ourselves than suffering for others.

Every evening at the same hour I see the left wall of the monastery light up, they are the cells to which the monks are retiring; the light lasts a few minutes and then goes out. But each of us carves out a cell for himself wherever he may be, even among his family. And it is not habit which drives us out of the times, but the nature of our work. The penance imposed by the monks and the months and years of imprisonment inflicted by the judges do not for a moment anticipate a better world.

And now enough of the diary. I have been like a Catholic observing the fasts, the alms and the number of hours he has worn the sack-cloth. My profession is to be a judge. I have gone to great pains to deny it, but my own best refuge and my surest defence is in that profession.

Translated from the Italian by Patrick Bowles

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Images and Reflections

Perambulations in the dawn
Through long cold silent empty streets
Bring him to the frozen playground
And one of many stony-hearted seats

Trepidations of the day around
Him gather on the concrete lawn
The clocks in hock
The morning still in pawn
As waters from the drinking-fountain
Fall in rusted ornamental sheets
By the yellow brick
The childhood block

"Am I the mouse by parturition
Bringing forth the deckled mountain
Or merely of all dead beats
A study of decay in late fruition?"

This thought and others like it
Blow through the silent empty streets
As last night's final five-star news
Wreathed in the smoke from breakfast flues
Comes to the schoolyard for a taste of wit

A dillar, a dollar
A transatlantic scholar

Places
Faces
The face on the Third Grade floor
And names
And games
"*Adoro te devote*"
Humbly I adore
And because this lady of her beauty
I have unhorsed the golden traces
Drawn her carriage through
Long cold silent empty streets
Where the east wind, the Keats wind, blew

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Gulls eggs and smoked salmon
Say the bells of Great Mammon

"Your Majesty
Your Royal Highnesses
Your Excellencies
Your Graces
My Lords
Ladies
and—
But are there any further down
The sliding scale of imperfection?
I seem to be alone
Beyond the pale
Expanse of noble linen stretching to the throne

If I may say so, Sir
The simplest plowman setting out
To till his meagre parcel of your kingdom
Has better right
To speak about
The iminent collapse
Of all the values that we prize
Than I whom you have asked to bring some
Plaintive notes
In accents rough and wild
To your august attention

What need to summarize
The threats to gracious living?
Ill fares the Child of Progress, Sweet Invention!

The instant heated water chills
The telephone no longer dotes
On orders meekly taken
For even when reviled
Its silence shows we are forsaken

Monseigneur
Now in the ice-box years
When cubist hearts are shaken
Together

Forever
And a day
And then are taken

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Unawares
And go away
In different pairs
Over and over again—
The banked machines embellished
With sudden lights
Falter
And the highly polished
Better than human brain
Has the terrors
In the midst of mechanical flights
Of fancy
And the scientific errors
Which pride abolished
Flutter
Like little chromium bats
Through the cardboard halls of knowledge

The rusted busted triumph car
Subsides with Dives in it
Cross tyrant of the age of tin

Don Cesare
Majestat
Consider at this moment how
A seeming distance overhead
Icarus, the wingless hearse
Made from the silken public purse
Upsets the lofty dead
Like toys across the floor
Of their no longer living room
The flickered words upon the wall
Will not resume
Nor will the radio
Another voice shall summon
You and me
Most Puissant Liege
Ah, look, the lights grow dim
Are going out
And who can say
What may
Be under
The quaking floor of doubt?
Listen!
The thunder"

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Yankee Doodle come to town
Dunce's cap and academic gown

In lilac and in sumac
The widows of the Cadillac
Anoint the youthful gaze
By manifestly aged ways
With crinolines and champagne *sec*
The palace of Chapultepec
And early morning porridge served on trays

Their images
Give magic wages
And the heir apparent gauges
Mirror writing on the Christmas check

Black
The horses' plumes are black
The private secretary loses track
Of cards with upper left-hand corners bent

Lo, the weeping in the pantry
Lo, the parlor-maids bereft
Lo, the gathering of the gentry
Oh, the gentry, Oh, the gentry
Oh, the iron-hearted gentry
Impoverished gentry
Local gentry
Legal gentry who are Heaven sent
To discover who's in clover
How the money, how the money
Now the money can be spent

A perpetual chantry
So the gentry keep perpetual Lent

One two
Nothing new
Three four
Write some more

Perambulare, so he muses
The vestal hand is writing on the wall
With calligraphic strokes of colored chalk
Infinitives, infinity, the Latin way to walk

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"Take up your bed"
He said
"Perambulate with Me
Across the rusted waters of Lake Galilee
O ye of little faith"

How little? How little?
As little as a child
The grown-up fingers whittle
The wood that would grow wild
"And so I came by public stages
To the furious winter's rages
Here have walked and ta'en—"
The splintered chalk shuts off a classic vein

Simple Simon
Met a rhyme man
Going on the air

And some die mad
Others exhausted by their honors
Eat sacrificial dinners
Belated entries in the journals of the young
But every one has had
Perambulating failures
Which amuse the less-inspired
The hounds of Swinburne giving tongue
Bay from the next back yard
And some have grown up early, being tired
Of weeded hedgerows where the dahlias
Are not deified
Nothing is easy
But working makes it hard

"Myself," he says, "a shy boy playing hide
And seek among the numenous and recollected dead
Myself when young, if ever I were young
And not, as now, a blank word for the sleazy
And sycophantic syncopations of the demi-read
Myself, then, raised through miser-mocking days
With paper, cardboard, inkstains, cloth and glue
A monument beside the pyramid of Gaius Cestius
And there, God willing, I shall lie among
The children who in childhood led me through
The blackboard scored with symbols to infinity
Until I came to take my present concrete view"

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And yet the broken window-panes remind
The wind to mend its ways
The creaking floorboards in the washroom graze
The sun beyond the blind
Nothing is as nothing was
The dazzled panther hunts the milkwhite hind
And there's an end of days

Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner
Writing his life away
He startles from his curule chair
Oh, well-brushed locks, Oh, locket's wear
The telling marbles click with prayer
The swings upset the prophet's glare
The balanced see-saw breaks his stare
The hopscotch squares surround him there
The basketballs inflated bear
The weight of his presumed despair
Through rings and rings and rings of air
The schoolbell rings within his ear
Nine o'clock

The yellow brick
The childhood block
If he could drink the florid waters once
Again, and hear the music, thin but clear
Of clarinets attendant on the near
Performance of a stage play titled *Charlie's Aunt*
If he could cut the lilac
There the Indians might bivouac
There the baseball diamond glitter through the summer months
And if, and if, and if
He'd had a different life
Had once forgotten he must water Teacher's window plant
Would he now be named among the English poets?
Would he now, so venerable, serene
Breathe in the fumes of ancient gasoline?
The thought requires some study

Eeny, meeny, miney, mo
Catch a critic in the no
If he hollers "Shelley-ho!"
Eeny, meeny, miney, mo

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And now for the words the sea-birds say
After the aeroplane has passed them by

"*Adoro te devote*
Latens deitas
To see and do a duty
To wash the dirty glass

The footsteps of the tired
Go slowly home to Heaven
Their small-time lives prepared
The proud to be forgiven
What matter to the wicked
The prayers the poor put up?
The tallow candles flicker
That dying they may hope

Hidden lives are spent
Recklessly, and all for
Love of those who won't
Come back at once from Hell door

The lame, the halt, the blind
The blessed mourners too
The world's rejected stand
On stars above the sky

Their songs like trumpets shatter
Even the fierce denials
On earth the men who matter
Pale and their power fails

And so the rich complacent
World of brass and art
Is kept by many recent
Deaths from deadly hurt

God in His goodness takes
The sufferings of the just
For cargo to the shipwrecks
Refloated from the past

All glory be to Him
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Ah, *beata* Seraphim
Bear up the words that love the most'

So sing the convent sisters and their song
Borne up above the heaving chimney stack
Comes down to rest beside him on the dark cement

But soon the words begin to move among
Their daily errands, and the vacant seats
Of those who have been long in childhood pent
Receive a dusting from the soot in peace

He rises with his genius and his lack
Of certainty and goes through crumbling broken streets
To find an endless language
... the lost poems of Greece

Dunstan Thompson

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Ernst Fuchs

A PORTFOLIO

and an Interview

by William Mitchell

Ernst Fuchs was born February 13, 1930, in Vienna. He began his artistic training at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts under Prof. Albert Paris Gütersloh in 1945. Fuchs is the founder of the so-called Viennese School of painters of the surrealistic and fantastic. Most of the members of this group have been students of his at one time or another to learn the old-master technique which he has developed to a high degree of perfection by painstaking study of the Netherlandish Mannerists and the Venetians. He prefers to call the movement symbolistic rather than surrealistic, since it is more similar to the English Symbolists, the Pre-Raphaelites, and the Viennese Secession. The interview (in English) took place in Fuchs' studio in Vienna.

M. What led you to become an artist, Mr. Fuchs?
F. I think the influence of my father was very important in my becoming a painter. Although I don't really consider it my true profession. I'm a singer, you know. I continued in painting because I was afraid to sing.
M. Afraid?
F. I was afraid of myself. I fell into a trance which lasted quite

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some time, and that happened several times so that I began to think that painting was inferior to singing.

M. In what way inferior?

F. It is not as close to prophecy, because singing *is* prophecy, I believe. It is a language of its own with melodies and everything; painting is a completely other dimension. But painting is something I can do, and I think that the same message is in it, too, perhaps hidden.

M. How is such a message received by an artist?

F. Before beginning to sing I had believed in inspiration like the ancient peoples did. And after these events I saw that singing was the most pure way of being inspired. I had a hard time picking up painting again, and considering painting something worthwhile doing.

M. Then an artist expresses in his work the message he receives through inspiration. How does he receive inspiration?

F. I paint something I don't know; I don't look for the image. It may come from what people call the subconscious, but that is only one name for something where we think we accumulate and store our impressions. I remember when I was a small child, maybe three years old, I had experiences of the appearance of the spirits of the dead. Yet I didn't know about that. I didn't even know that people died.

M. Could you explain what inspiration is?

F. Inspiration is being contacted by spirits. You are always being contacted by spirits, good ones and bad ones. Artistic inspiration is just one level of this. Inspiration is an angel giving you a message. When Moses was told to build the Ark of the Covenant, he was told to build it according to the plan which God had shown him on the Mount. I would have to look it up to give the exact words. If you do something like that, by inspiration, you do it according to a pattern which is pre-existent. The artist is nothing but a medium, to a greater or lesser degree according to his gift, of wrangling with what he sees or feels.

M. Then inspiration is somehow connected with a gift which the artist has, to receive it and bring it to expression.

F. Yes, if you put three or four people in front of a tree, they will all agree that they see a tree, but they will draw it differently according to how they are gifted. The source of that information and inspiration is the experience of nature—the contact with their surroundings. It could as well be the contact with an angel.

M. What is an angel? Aren't they symbols or parables for the forces of nature?

F. No, an angel is a creature like any other creature. They can descend as messengers, and can suddenly be seen or dreamt of. What I paint is usually a reflection of these things that I see or that I dream of. Maybe there are certain people who are gifted to see that which

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for ordinary people is invisible. Other people are gifted to interpret reality, like Cézanne. Some people can open their eyes as wide as they want, but they will never see the things I paint. Even the subject matter is for them invisible. So the artist of the fantastic is to be compared more to a madman by people who cannot understand.

M. Then many people think you mad because your pictures are not within their experience?

F. Yes, yet some people know what the subject matter is without even having to be told. Last summer when I was in Israel, I showed a drawing to a twelve year old boy. He said, "Yes, it is well done; you know how to draw." When I asked what he thought the drawing was, he answered, "I don't know the English word, but we call it *Malachim* (angels)." Sometimes I felt myself completely mad if I should call that an angel. But now I have more proof; I have met a few people who call the drawing an angel without being told what it is. There must be a common contact in the subconscious with some people that makes spiritual contact less subjective.

M. Have you always painted subjects of fantasy?

F. No, I went to art school and did drawings after nature, which are completely different from my other work. You know, all the nudes and things. I never did like to draw them very much. I wasn't interested in *using* nature. I never use models now. Even as a child I always drew out of my imagination.

M. Have other artists in different periods done this also?

F. Yes, definitely. I was greatly impressed when I first saw Blake. In spite of certain traces of classicism which make him easy to place in history, there are things in his work which do not seem to fit anywhere. When he draws a prophet it looks as if it were seen above time.

M. Your present works are something of a new approach in subject matter. Can you explain what you are doing now?

F. In my recent works I am representing something which can look like polished stone or quartz. The fountain in Bosch's "Garden of Heavenly Delights" is similar to this. The fountain is stony and yet at the same time it is like a plant. You can eat it.

M. Do you think that Bosch represented these forms purposely?

F. No, I don't think that he had a conscious idea of what he was painting, just as I don't have a conscious idea of what I paint. It makes me think that his inspiration was on the same level. Until recently Bosch was for me fantastic animals and creatures. Perhaps I overlooked the plant forms. Bosch was much imitated in his time, but the trees and plants were not imitated. The fantastic creatures attracted more attention. I myself did not until recently see them.

M. Do you know of other examples of this?

F. I found something in the Bible which made me think of it.

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In Ezekiel 28 there is a description of a cherub with mention of brightness and precious stones and "Stones of fire" which probably are the stars. Perhaps I wouldn't have needed it to draw my things. Yet I am glad to see it because it gives me proof that I am on the right way. I don't want to be a madman, or at least not to be thought of as one.

M. The surfaces in your works are stones?

F. No, these things can be stones or they can be a substance like the meat of fruits such as oranges. They are both solid and liquid.

M. But in ordinary concepts these are opposite terms.

F. "Stone" and "water" are for us only analogies. There is a story in the *Lesser Hekhaloth* which gives an example of the possible relationship of polished stones to water.

Ben Azai was deemed worthy and stood at the gate of the sixth palace and saw the ethereal splendor of the pure marble plates. He opened his mouth and said twice, "Water! Water!" In the twinkling of an eye they decapitated him and threw eleven thousand iron bars at him. This shall be a sign for all generations that no one should err at the gate of the sixth palace.★

Subconsciously we all have a knowledge of these relationships. I want to make a book now, and then I will compare these relationships, and try to explain it. I will call the book *Architectura Caeleste*. I have only started thinking about the relationships. Before I just painted. I really didn't care to know what it was. In painting it is easier to give such representations, because in writing there are certain concepts which words connote which cannot be erased in order to compare stones to water.

M. When did you begin in this direction? Your earlier works are more concerned with grotesque and fantastic creatures.

F. The first pictures that looked like this were done in Munich in 1958. In the earlier works I was following another inspiration. That was a world that corresponds to more sensual things—demons and evil spirits. I got to my present direction through my religious pictures. I did the drawings for the church-altar in Hetzendorf-Wien to get the spirit of the Holy Rosary, which I didn't really know much about. I got many images which were completely new forms. I was converted to Catholicism in America in 1956, and started doing some religious pictures—Crucifixions, etc.

M. Abstract artists pretend to express the confused and despairing state of modern man by the complete dissolution of recognizable

★ *(Gershom G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition, N.Y., 1960, p. 15.)*

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forms, with only color remaining. Is your direction toward grotesque distortion and fantastic symbolism a sort of criticism?

F. No, in my earlier works I was not trying to criticize anything. There was to be a trial because I had supposedly dishonored the Church in my drawing *Crucifixion* (1949). But I did not want to criticize anything. I did not have the intention of sacrilege because I have always had the greatest respect for Jesus Christ, even in my pre-confessional days. Because I drew a crucified man, it did not mean that it was Christ—it just turned out that way. I think that I merely made a commentary on the concentration camps. A lot of my relatives died in concentration camps and the thought that you were completely helpless against a gang of killers made a great impression on me.

M. How do you begin to formulate a picture?

F. I don't think about my work, especially while I am working. After I finish, sometimes I try to find out what I did. I just start, without a single line of preparation. I don't know if I will keep on painting the way I do now. I did not think eight years ago that I would paint such things. Sometimes I am asked to do things this way or that, but I cannot draw a single line. I was asked to do a sketch for a mural of the death of Mary, but it was very unsatisfying.

M. You say that you never use models, but how do you explain the individuality and personality of many of your figures?

F. I have the feeling that I paint things and people that have existed or will one day exist. They appear in the fact of a medium, like in a necromantic session to recall the spirits of the dead. I think that sort of thing should not be done, because it works. But without wanting to do this, I think I sometimes did it.

M. Are you consciously trying to shock and disturb people with your paintings?

F. No, I am attempting to make invisible things visible. These things are there, and I try to represent them for people who cannot see them. I have no choice actually what to do, it is like being under a power that is greater than you. When painting, I am painting something that I don't know, until it becomes clear and takes shape. Then I think what it is. I made the comparison between prophecy and painting. In Vienna they say, "We don't need Fuchs' private revelations." But I didn't ask for them, I have these inspirations and I give myself to them.

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"*Passio*"

painting 1948

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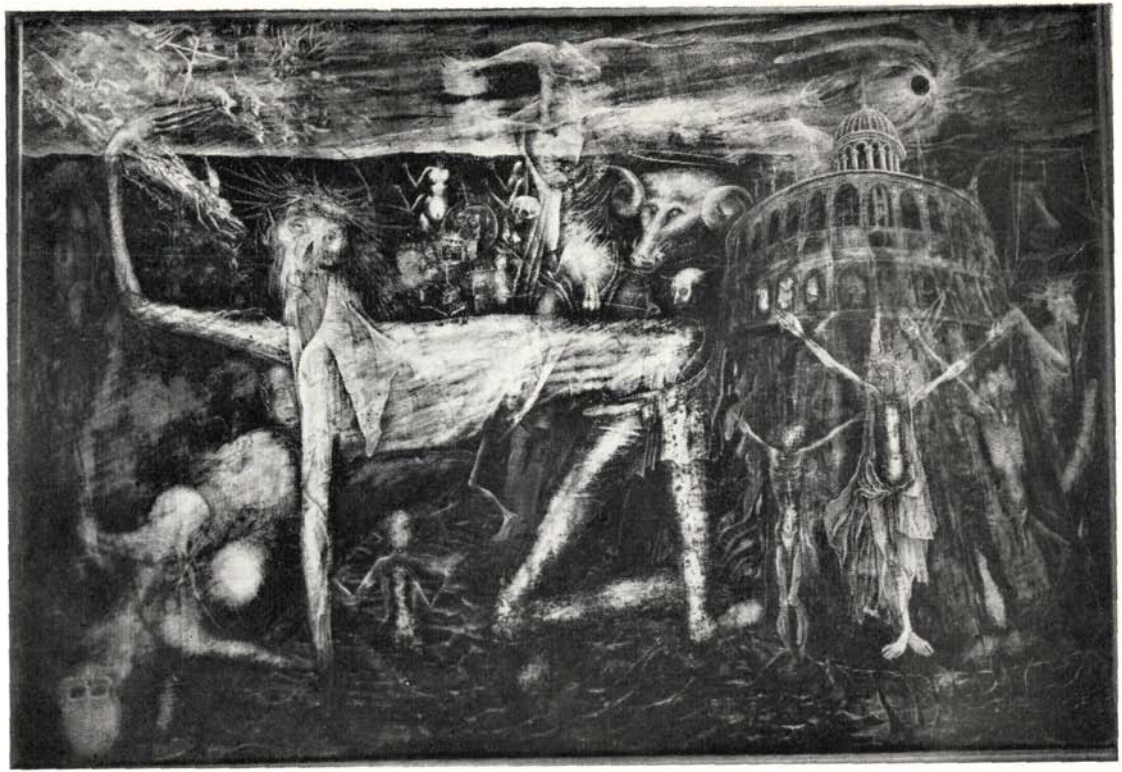

The Temptation of St. Antony — *painting 1948–49*

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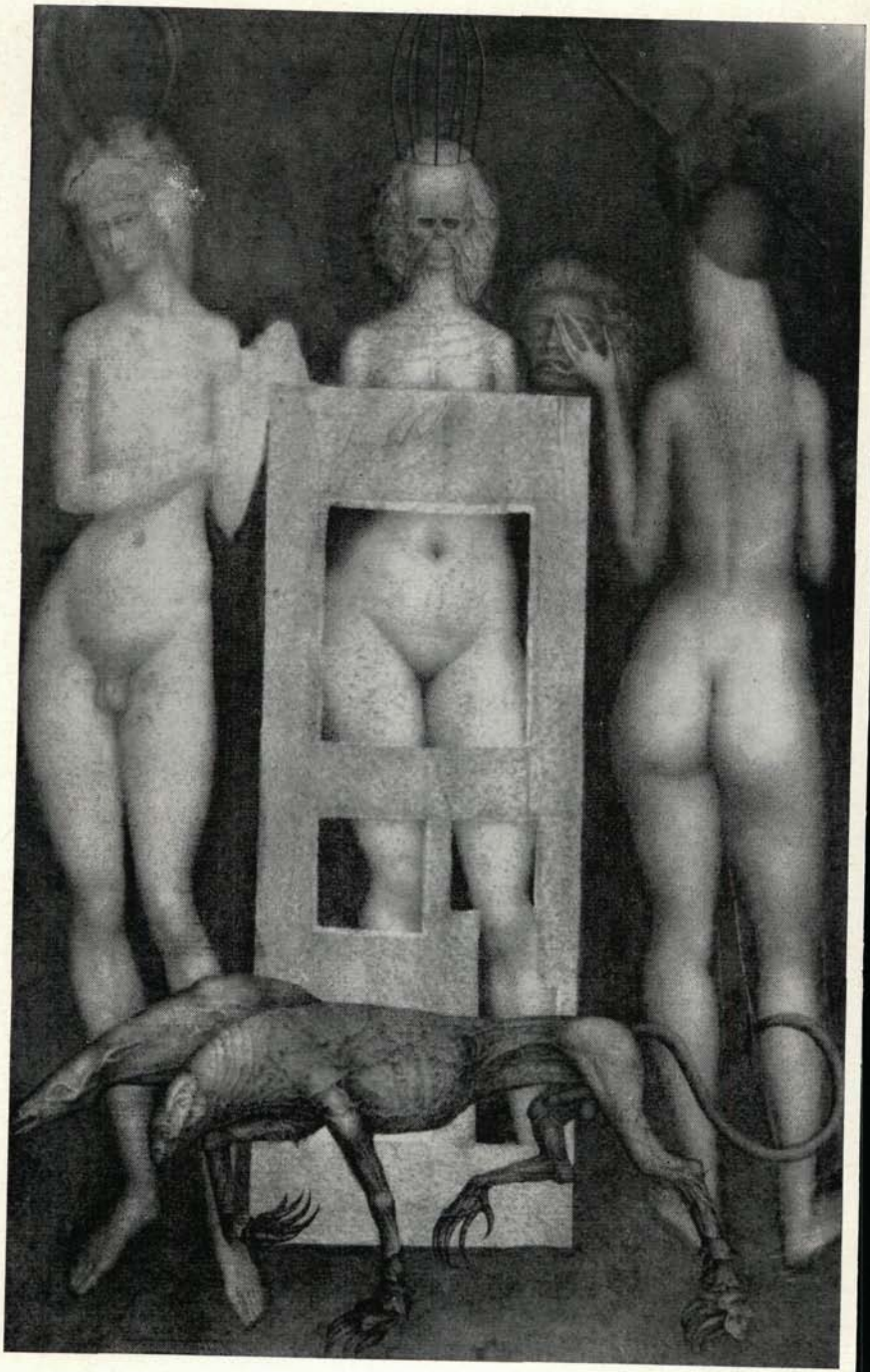

"Hellish Trinity" *Aquarell 1950*

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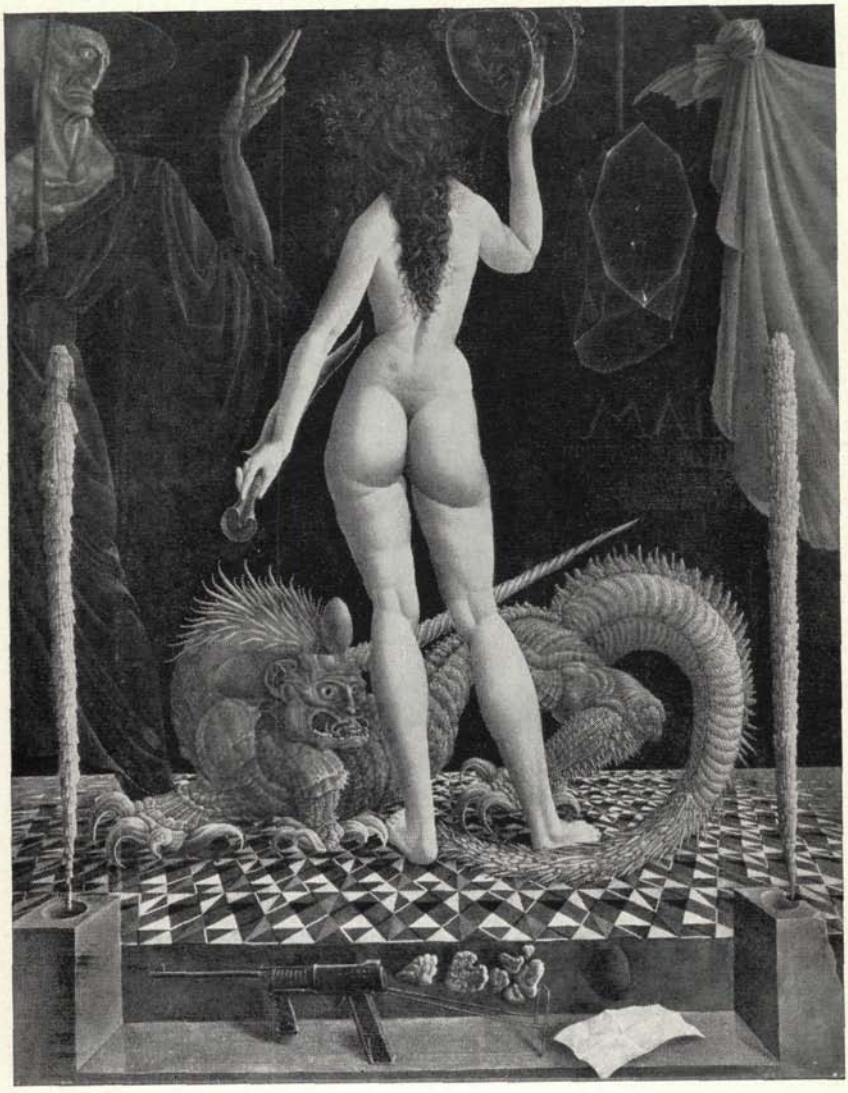

The Transformation of Lucrecia *painting 1952*

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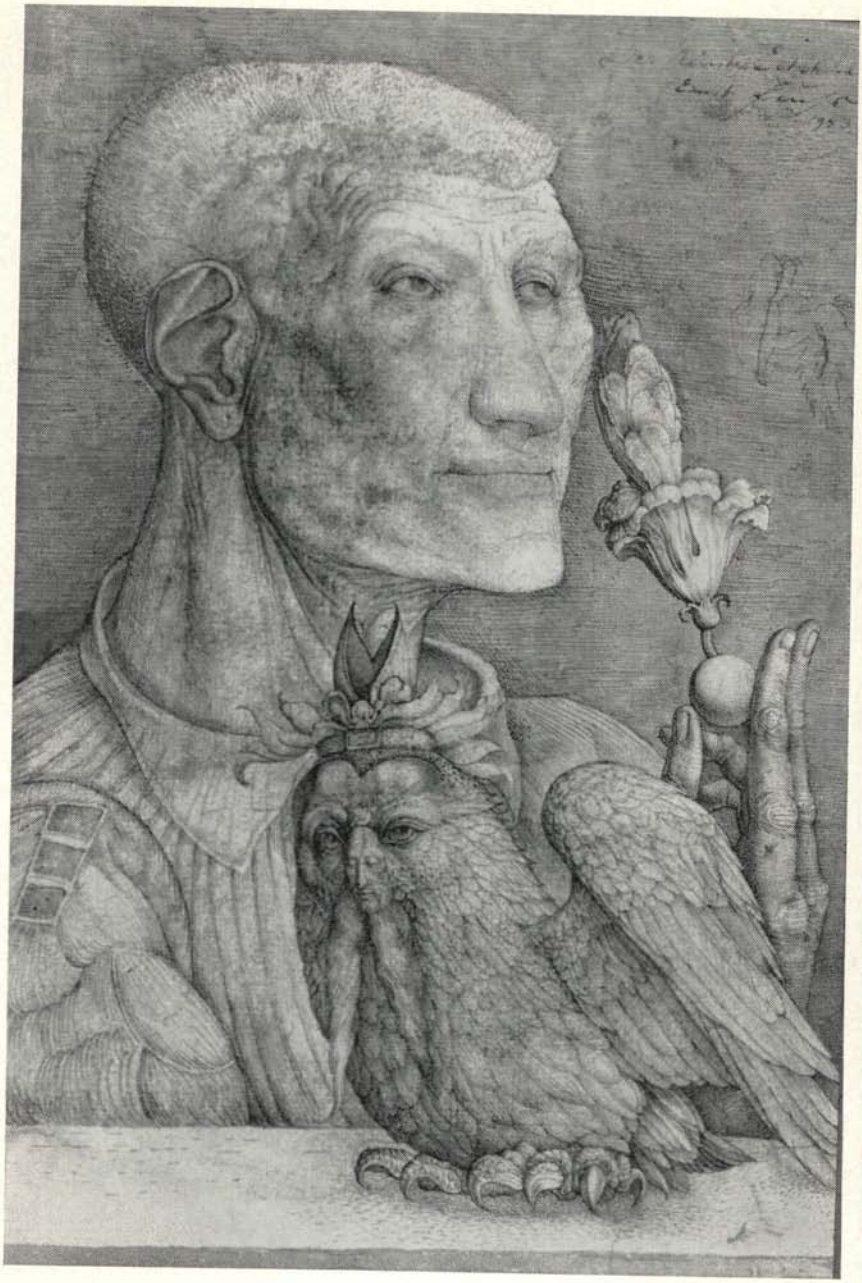

"Meister Eckehard" *Drawing 1953*

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The Destruction of Sodom & Gomorrha *painting 1954*

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"Mercur" *painting 1954*

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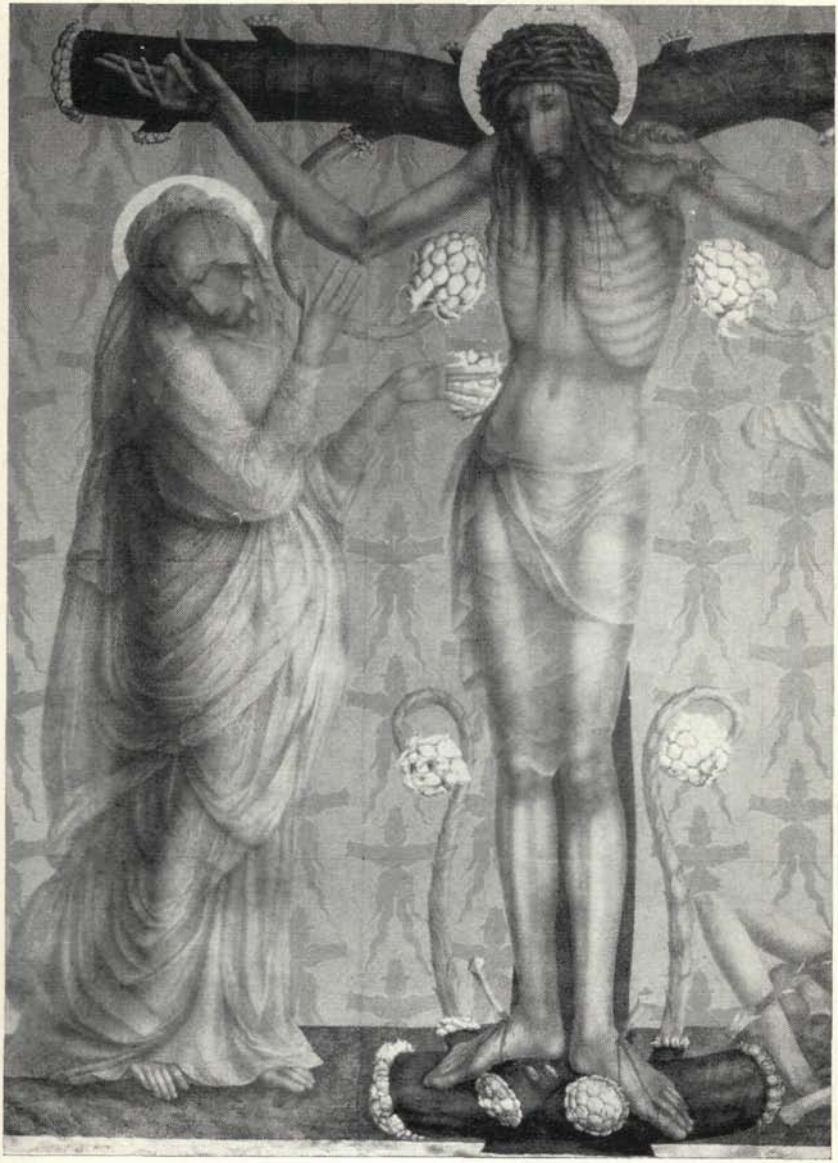

"The Painful Mysteries" *painting on parchment 1961*

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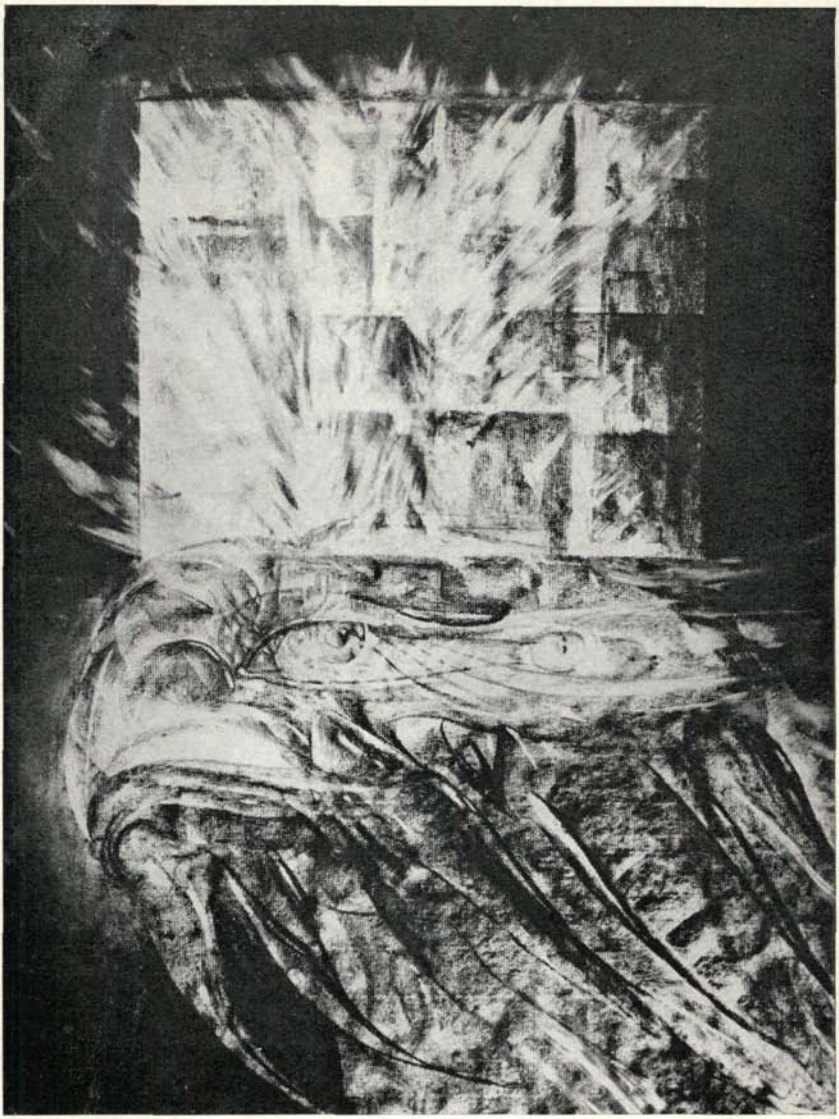

"Cherub" *charkoldrawing 1961*

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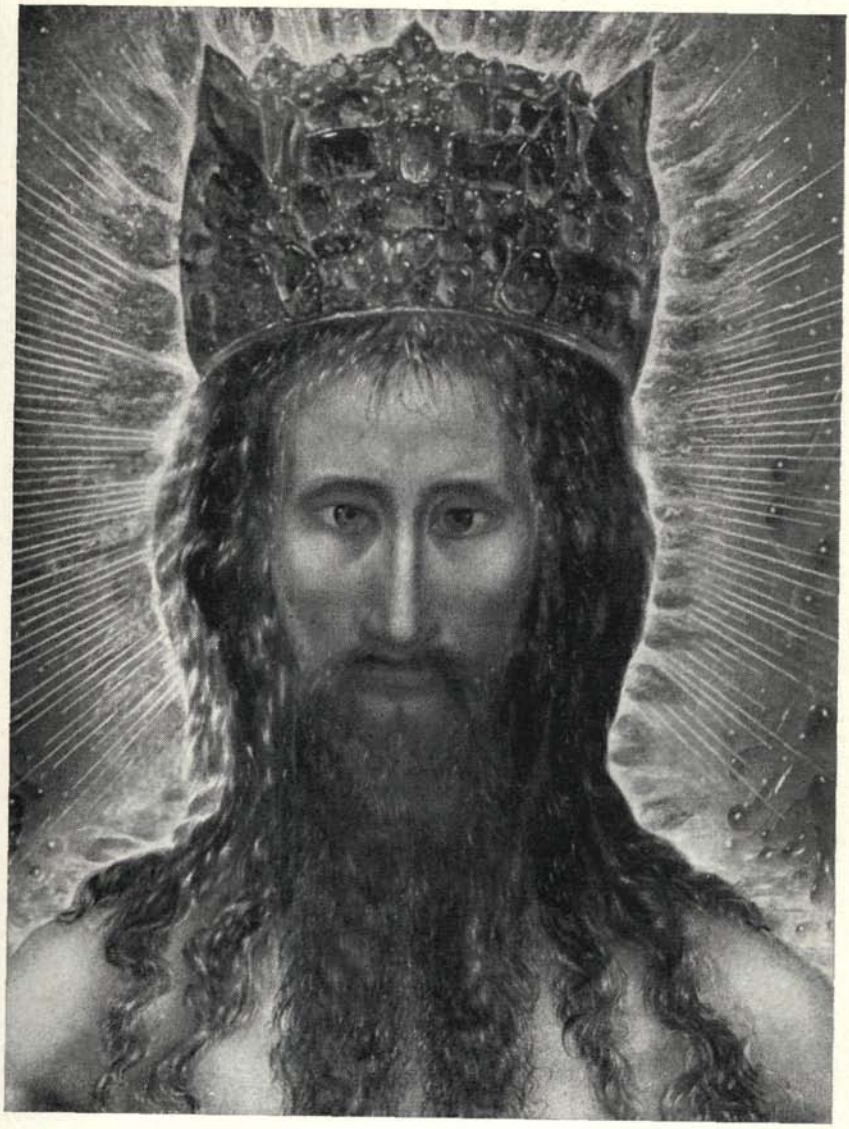

"Head of Christ" *Detail painting 1962*

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"psalm 69" *painting 1949–60*

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THE TRAMP

In memoriam Robert Colquhoun

How easily we say he's down
And out or itinerant, that tramp
Rummaging the afternoon,
Forgetting the hours' inertia, the damp
Doorways, cafes, each porter's frown.

He walks among the industrious dead,
His truth is their embarrassment.
They fear his innocence, that intrepid
Degeneration fouling the cement,
So each one turns his timid head.

He picks his seats between the shades
An anonymous huddle passionately
Indifferent and unafraid
Of what tomorrow may conceive
Or desecrate or leave unpaid.

And if the weather cooperates
He sits in the day and lets the sun
Untie his world's complexities;
Simpler than thought at thirty one
The business the Market never states.

Those children's chaos under the trees
Involves him in its mystery
Until the desolate years release
His fierce goodbye to history,
And sometimes as he richly sees

The leaves fidget in the wind
Remembers that morning sun's amen
While he eloped with his vocation
And was never seen again
Attending trivialities.

—FRANCIS BOYLAN

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ST. GERMAIN DES PRÉS

I sit on a bench eating cherries,
Amazed that I wasn't cheated,
For the whole bag is ripe and deep red.
It's been a strange afternoon—
Me just out of the hospital
(Dismissed without a diagnosis)
Trying to walk again, feeling shaky
After putting that money in a hotel vault.

So... just awhile ago a creature,
Wingless and in purple, came by
On a light breeze, her breasts trembling
And her walk argumentative.
Not long after, a barking sound but no dog;
A swirl of feathers but no birds;
A shadow of clouds, a piano, a man
Frothing at the mouth and raving of God.

Maybe that's how it starts, absolutely innocent,
Until the street of shutters closes
Against you, and you'd better go home.

—NORMAN ROSTEN

SUN, YOUR GRIEF IS MY GRIEF

Why am I so sad?
Often I have enjoyed the rain,
but for the last week
it hasn't eased up once;
the earth has jilted the sun.
Sun, don't leave me too
& let *my* tears fall
& the earth become
overun again with
Arks & God's favourites.

—TED MILTON

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A DIFFICULTY

Moving across the light, on agitated hips,
She hurries away breadcrusts and grapestones
And glances in mid-talk, as if from fear,
At the irreproachable sea. Lanes frown away
Through the gaps in the hills she is looking at now
In the other window; but the floor throws up
Immediately, there, fresh patterns of her hands
And hair quite undismayed. So why is afternoon's
easiness
Not beginning easily? Is the room
Not set correctly for the thing to come?
Or did we break some subject much too soon?

—ALAN BROWNJOHN

APHRODITE

Futility is echo
in the giant chasm's
breath
Her unattainable body
moves
the world of man
to death

while She
denied completion
in the human nights
of trial
calls upon immortal Gods
to kill her
for a while

—SUZANNE LA MARRE

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Sonnet

by

Dallas E. Wiebe

The cell was not a literary cell. It was neither Nabokovian nor Kafkaesque. It was just a cell six feet wide, eight feet long and ten feet high. It contained (1) a steel cot, (2) a ventilating window five inches square, (3) no light, (4) a porcelain urinal and (5) Geoffrey Wolgamot, murderer of college students, whose execution was nigh.

Jeff stood an even six feet. His soles were broad and flat. His toes splayed. His legs ascended cylindrically to an apron of fat. His buttocks were pink and round like beach balls. His navel, breasts, and stomach were no longer lascivious. Fat hung from his shoulders like a poncho. A lattice of blood vessels covered his bald skull. His ears leaped red and pointed from his head like two hard livers. Beneath white eyebrows, two square pits revealed the whites of his eyes. Beneath his pinhole nostrils his rubberoid lips, cracked and black with

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caked blood, encased two canine teeth, one in the upper gum and one in the lower. His garb was that of the prison, pink denim cut like a mandarin's coat.

He entered the cell with his mandarins shining like a fevered tongue. He must look, he thought, like a great ripe pimple with his white and flaccid head popping from his pink collar. But then his mind returned to normal and he named his world. He named the four walls after the four winds; Zephyrus, Boreas, Notus and Eurus. The wall with the ventilator was determined to be west, Zephyrus, although there was no reason to decide that. Jeff set the urinal against one half of the east (Eurus) wall. On the other half was the cell door with the eleven bars. These Jeff named after the eleven faithful disciples gathered by our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The lock on the door was named Judas. The west wall was covered with tick-tack-toe games in which no one ever won. The south wall was cracked like a geophysical map, with small cracks beginning at the top and running into big cracks at the base. Mountain ranges of plaster seemed ready to fall for a last judgement. The north wall where the cot was chained was the scoreboard. There vertical scratches in multitudinous hieroglyphs covered the wall in groups of fourteen. The ceiling seemed to belly down in the middle and Jeff called it Hesperus. The floor he named Peru because it had a jagged and irregular rise of cement from north to south. Yea, Geoffrey in his role of the namer of created things gave a name to the very cockroach that nightly walked across his eyelids as it journeyed to the urinal for refreshment. He was hight Tom Jones. Beverly McKnight, Rosabelle Fink and Lascelles Abercrombie were the names given to three mosquitoes that drifted through the ventilator and glided down on Zephyrus, dead, to Jeff's feet. An ant entered on the second day and Geoffrey promptly called him Centaur. Where he went during the following night remained a mystery to Jeff who craved company, even from the beasts of the walls.

But the naming took only, at best, some five minutes. His Jeffhood had reacted positively to the new world that

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he was in and it assumed control. But what now? Jeff thought. Jeff absolutely pondered what to do to keep his mind from becoming like his guts. He decided in a twinkling, of course, that what his world needed was what every world must have if it is to be a world; it must have art. But what kind of art? Music? No, he couldn't sing. There was no opportunity to paint or draw. He could not write a novel without paper, pencil and a library. So, within a total of ten minutes he had set his course. His world was named and he would write poetry to prove that even in the vilest of circumstances the mind is still a kingdom. With his world and fate determined, Geoffrey fell asleep. He awakened three hours later, or rather what he thought to be three hours later, in darkness and in pain. The darkness continued, but the pain receded when he unhooked his tongue from his two jagged teeth.

For the rest of that first day, or what he thought to be the rest of the first day, Geoffrey relaxed his wits and exercised his mind with a subject for his poem. He failed; he did not achieve a subject. The guard brought his gravy and bread and Jeff rested. He felt sleepy. At least, he thought, I must write a first line today, assuming that it is still the first day. Again he failed to achieve. Exhausted and with his mind neutralized, he wrote, 'God has left us with our hands intact.' But then he looked at his hands, at the warts and scabs, at the cracked and bleeding fingernails, and he belched. A piece of ceiling fell on his head and he wrote, "When I have fears that I might cease to be." Idiocy, he thought. Being is nothing. He walked to the urinal, stared in and wrote, 'Christ, when I look into the abyss I get disturbed." He scratched his head and sipped the blood from his fingernails. He licked his plate clean and said with dove-like tongue, "Let the beasts in Arcady sing." But sing what? Sing "ut and sol-fa." Sing "nuts". Sing "fah la la." Sing "fah"? Why, of course. Let the "fah" stand at the end of the line like a promontory to be washed away, to crumble down into the watery abyss of the rest of the poem, down into the wet and swelling black ding-dong of ablution. Let the "fah" stand at the end of the line like a promontory defying the colliding

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elements, like Ushant, like Finisterre, like The Cape of Good Hope, like Cape Horn, like Cape Hatteras, and like all the other capes of this world that deserves the very best from its watery belt. Let the "fah" stand like a captain on the prow of his ship, standing to outface the running blast, the raging sea, the watery clasp of matrimony, the fine foam of ferocious, fierce and fuming typhoons, the hard cold of Boreas' aching blast, the balmy sigh of Zephyrus' sibilant fart. Jeff, you are a man to be contended with. Your tongue trips like the pregnant aardvaark, like the loping doe, like the ruptured impala, like the lesser and greater kudus, like the musty elephant, like the lungs of the long distance runner. What a fine instrument it is the Lord gave to the likes of us for the making of fine phrases. Once more, then, into the larynx. Let the "fah" stand out like a sore thumb, like the dribbled snow, like hands cold as ice, like the silent stone, like a mossy stone, like the bouncing, bountiful, beaming, boisterous, burning, belching, bawling hiccup of the saints. Jeff rested. He dropped his tongue onto his frontal fat. Time to close my little peepers, he thought, and night came on like Burnham Wood.

When he awakened refreshed, purified and flatulant, the day held no fears for Jeff. With his newly found gratitude for loquacity, with his pristine confidence, he could face life and live it to the hilt. With the fear of blackness gone, poetry, the work of his days, came sliding into his mind like bread dough into a pan. On the second day he remembered the first line: "Let belles in Arcady sing fah la la." Then he remembered that "fah" must end the first line. The second line must begin, then, with "la la." Right. And the first period occurred. He meditated the period. What now? It was obvious what must come next, the location of the song. And there is only one place where poetic song can come from, "beside the Hippocrene." Fine so far. Arcady was emerging—and it must have birds. Jeff wrote, "For birds..." Exhausted and head splitting, he rested, for all was not too well.

On the third day, or rather what he thought to be the

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third day, he added, "And trees have sucked away the silent words." At first he wanted "sipped" instead of "sucked". But "sipped" sounded too literary to him, and, besides, birds and trees do "suck" the waters of a spring. Jeff loafed the rest of the day. He was sated and satisfied. Zephyrus sighed. Bread and gravy appeared.

Lines came more easily now for Jeff in his unbridled Jeffhood. Each day he extended the poem to the extent of his will and strength, *viz.*, one line. On the fourth day he write, "That once told to all the world that raw..." However, it was on this day that he began to doubt his memory. Suddenly overcome with panic, he realized the fragility of recollection. He summed up:

> Let the beasts in Arcady sing fah
> La la beside the Hippocrene. For birds
> And trees have sipped away the silent words
> That once could tell to all the world that raw...

He fixed that much in his mind and rested.

The next day, or rather what he thought to be the next day, our heavenly Jeff felt a new confidence. He added, 'Endeavor is the sin of fools. The flaw..." The lines for the sixth, seventh and eighth days were equally easy before a second major qualm made him summarize. At the end of the eighth day he remembered:

> Let giraffes in Arcady sing fah
> La la beside the Hippocrene. For birds
> And trees have sipped away the sobbing words
> That once told to all the world that raw
> Endeavor is the sickness of fools. The flaw
> In all that lust is that these flagrant herds
> Forget that forty is no end. When turds
> Are dropped in Eden, the eagle dulls his claw.

On the ninth day, the jailer, or whoever it was, slipped a plate of beans and bread into his cell and he wrote, "The jackass brays inside the silent wood." On the tenth day he

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wrote, "And sparrows flutter up the walks where moss..." On the eleventh day he wrote, "And flowers whisper out that love is dead." Number twelve was simple. He said, "Old angels flutter past. Cold cod bleed." Thirteen: "Antiphons. Carp and catfish wish..."

On the fourteenth day of his sojourn in the cell, or rather what he thought to be the fourteenth day of his stay in the cell, Jeff—the walls must certainly think of him as Jeff by now in their long familiarity—rose early, at least he thought it to be early. He had, he knew, a special task that day, or rather what he thought to be a day. His flamingo denims were no longer shining. They looked rather more like dehydrated afterbirth. But Jeff didn't mind—he told himself so—the nutbrown clots in his pants. Exaltation was his only wont, for today he felt that the poem was to be completed. Deep in his heart he knew that today was to end it. He seemed to himself to be on the verge of a great new land where the nut trees drop their nuts and the ladies lie spread-eagle for public delectation, a land where lemon-sided cattle squirt nectar into the ears of all who listen to the brooks and bees. Oh draw near to his presence, the nereids sang, near to almighty Jeff with his golden genitals and silver tongue. Throw garlands on his naked limbs. And the last line came like a broken voice in a broken wind, "Crows pick eyes to see bald, yellow blood." Oh holy, holy, holy, Jeff thought. Oh magnify his rectitude, his exactitude, his magnitude, his plenitude. Come before his presence with swollen ankles. Know that Jeff is good; his art endures forever.

Then came the lassitude like magi to bore, to pry, to intrude, to upset the apple cart of a sneak marriage. As usual, Jeff had to rest after his labors. He rested while the jailer—Jeff still did not see him—pushed a plate of beans and toast under the door. Jeff rested and thought, I must now name and define what I have created. So it was that in the doldrums of creation, in the horse latitudes of research, his first observation established what he suspected, the poem had fourteen lines. Fourteen lines for fourteen days. A fortnight of energy. That he found natural. The fact established

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his and the poem's symmetry and verisimilitude. Next he noted that each line had five stresses and those stresses tended to alternate with weaker syllables. Most lines he noted were made up of ten syllables with the syllables alternately weak and strong. What shall I name this line that fits my Jeffly tongue? It was then he decided to break the line into smaller units. The natural divisions were natural to Jeff, who now felt a benumbing symmetry usurping his role of name giver and creator. I shall call the small units marriages because each of them is made up of one weak and one strong syllable with the strong syllable on the right hand of the weaker. But marriages was not the proper name and Jeff knew it. The name was not celestial enough to hoodwink the scholars. Moreover, marriage did not define. The word is a relationship, not a description. Jeff plumbed the very depths of his mind until he recalled the process of scholarly classification. *De profundis* came "Greek, 'iambos' and Latin, «iambus'." I will call it, he announced to himself, an iamb. Learned brevity demands the dropping of the "os" and "us." Jeff knew he had achieved the proper pedantry in the name.

Then to the meter. Certainly, Jeff knew, most of the lines had five iambs. The metrical description must include that idea. He next recalled the prefix "pent" which suggests five. Thus it was that the meter was inevitably named iambic pentameter. By this time, Jeff could not avoid the striking rhyme scheme. It was ABBA ABBA CDE EDC. Moreover, he noted, the poem broke after the eighth line and the last six lines balanced the first eight. The first eight lines he named octave; the last six sestet. Jeff laughed to himself, "man is a classifying animal." And then he felt disgust. Oh Jeff in heaven, he thought, what is this monster I have created? It is a machine. It is mechanical. It is an artistic robot, but lovely as Hesperus, as soft as Eve's mammaries, as fecund as the first source. It was to be, he knew, a chosen vessel for love.

Finally, the category to be established for the poem itself, a lyric poem of fourteen iambic pentameter lines which is made up of an octave and a sestet and with a rhyme scheme of ABBA ABBA CDE EDC. He wanted a name suggesting

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song, of course. The poet as singer. He first thought of songlet, a little song. But that sounded to him too harsh and, besides, it suggested piglet. Next he tried songette. That too sounded too much like something mundane, say, a laundromat. His difficulty was the "g" and he knew it. Then leave it out, which he did—a standard Jeff manoeuver—and he knew he had the perfect archetypal name, the perfectly labelled avatar. The name was simple and as bright as Sirius. And as he said aloud the word, sonnet, the cell door squealed open and there stood the jailer—smiling.

Jeff looked up and in that moment realized that the smiling jailer was Homerhick, Sofoolclean, Virgiloan, Thomystican, Jackupone da Toadlike, Petrarchoftriumphalos, Marlovarian, Shakespearone, Donnion, Driedon, Poperfast, Johnsonianblunderfunkian, Boswellianliverlover, Greyedelegyinchurchstyplagued, Wordsrotfoulfellowflounderinthamesatdawn, Coleridgeanclaptrapfornewcriticallousesonburke, Brownianmovementformedformetaphorindramatisillydialogarhythums, G. M. Hopkinsondiseased, Oscarwildwoodflowerindelightime, T. S. Elroticopurelationforobjectivisticorrelaterselynottomentionlydionoiseinwastelandofunlikeness, Jimmyjackjoycejumpingingerlyinutmegaphonicaplongercuntdumbobloominginpluradonnabellarizingsadtidingsofseasadismuflunginsterrewakeabovelustdumbell, Ezrapoundinpocketworthpenceinbushmanflauntincavalcanticleinventricularanusforhellmouthingdolcevitalismire, Bellowsingbullbrainsboundingbrassmonkeysonnetstoyouhelenflatulator, Grahamgangreengrasslikariansntriptimequietuskforbrightonrocklikesubsistantial and sad.

Jeff smiled for all that and stepped out of the cell to move, to stroll, to wander, to meander, to go to whatever he was doing all that to. And the last walk was leisurely. He loafed along, one doggy after another. And as he walked he exercised the eternal privilege of the creative spirit, he named his world. The jailer he called Orion because he had three studs in his truss. He himself then had to be Canis Major, and Canis Major he became. The seven doors which he passed he called after the seven deadly sins. A small crack in the floor he named cloaca maxima. A pattern of inter-

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locking cracks on the wall he named Mississippi. A spider web became the fickle finger of fate. The spider therein was Clotho. The breeze in the corridor he named astro, for it came from the stars. The six light bulbs he called Hyades. The door to the hanging yard he called Cerberus, for it had three screws holding the handle. The handle he named Roncesvalles. The light of the sun, which blinded him when he emerged, he named Paraclete. The gallows he named Ur. The steps to the platform he called Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The floor of the gallows he named Bethlehem. The rope became Paul; the handle for the trap, St. Peter.

The hangman, who stood tall as timber, who wore a black robe with blood-red arabesques shaped like sickles on it, who wore a hood like a member of a black klan, who wore black blucher boots, who sweated daintily into the surplice of death, who wore black gloves as if he were ready to fly to Egypt, who had hairy arms like the trunks of Ozymandias, who wore as the seal of his office a chain around his neck and from whose every link there dangled an amulet with the name of a hanged man on it, who had a permanent smile under his mask, who held a hood for Jeff, who hummed as he spun the noose ("Jeff be nimble; Jeff be quick"), who rocked from leg to leg, who longed for his bright fate in the everlasting necrophilia of heaven, was named King Kong.

The hood, which Jeff called Magdalene, was slipped over his pyramidal head. The noose, which Jeff named Atropos, would not fit. It was necessary to tighten it until it took hold, found a grip, effected sure security, etc., and Jeff gasped. Moreover, the rope was especially discomfiting inasmuch as the hangman, who was hight King Kong, had learned his trade exceedingly well. That is, long drops for light men, short drops for obesity. Jeff was to fall, according to K.K.'s calculations, three inches. Once in fact, he recalled it with luxury, he had ripped the head clean off his fat uncle. Different drops too for women. All this recorded in his

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manual which contained every moment of his skill and experience. So, proportions were exact. He studied them at night in bed and he slept well thereafter. All documented and with at least three footnotes per page. With case histories and bibliography, of course.

Tom Dun: Weight: ten stone.[1] Height: 14 hands. Drop: two meters.[2] Results: head popped off and swung like a baby's cradle in the breeze. Wind: 28 mph sse. Barometer: 30.99 and falling.[3] Humidity: 56% at a temperature of 86 degrees (Fahrenheit). Blood: c. one quart. Disinfectant: sulphuric acid and sand. Rope: hempen and homespun. Inferences: none.

Remarks: he breathed something like "seath" when he hit bottom. My wife began her period today. I felt fine in general. Digestion normal. Athlete's foot remarkably active. Breath: sweet and clean. Shopped at the A. & P. Sale on cling peaches. Don't like cling peaches. Bought three cans of brisling sardines for curing of rot. One carcass between each toe. Billy cutting his first tooth. Slobbered on me. Kicked the shit out of him. Read Sermon on the Mount. Painted Billy's athlete's foot with pine tar. Gave wife treatment for hers with hot iron. Reconsidered the case of E. Rick Rotstone of yesterday. Quaere: why did he stick out his tongue when he hit bottom? No answer. Philosophical quaere for the day: death sentence for pedantry. Sleepy by ten o'clock. Looked forward to next day's work. Splendid urination before bed. Made wife clean it up. First time in two days. Praised God for his benevolence. Thanked him for overtime and time-and-a-half clause in contract. Kissed wife good-night. Bed warm and inviting.

The hangman smiled at Jeff, who in all his power and glory, in saecula saeculorum, who in all his pristine omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence stood smiling on the smiling trap door (hangman! hangman! slack your line!). In fact, the noose was too tight to lower, to scowl, to be sullen, to grimace. It was Jeffy's own little smile and blush that pleased the hangman while all the world spread labia

[1] Small stones, With no moss on them. Cf. Sisyphus.

[2] It must also be noted that the rope gave to the distance of two centimeters. It is, therefore, not exactly correct to say that the drop was two meters. It was actually two meters and two centimeters.

[3] Barometer adjusted to sea level.

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wide like the rattlesnake in his minutely dithyrambic peristalsis. «Chin up,' the hangman smiled and Jeff, maker in heaven and on earth, dropped his jaw to a laughing level, for somewhere a minute black navel was turning in ever widening gyres and then suddenly twitching forward in that fundamental arabesque that is the source of life, love, liberty and the pursuit of Elysium. Jeff saw it, just as plain as day, in his mind's eye. In his tranquillity he recollected small rubbery breasts that used to fit perfectly into his eye sockets and short circuit the fuse of righteousness. Oh Sodom, I longed for your bright face. By the rivers of Gomorrah I sat me down on my fat ass and wept for you, o nylon, black, meshed and thigh-diddling. He recollected ankles, neat, pleasant to the thumbs, like locks that bind together whatever the weather might dictate, order, command, assign, dispose or in some manner impose design on flagrant, false, fuming, funny, fine, formless or fickle human inclinations. He recollected fatted calves, thighs like the honeycomb, hips like the essence of Avalon, a waist like the only eye, shoulders like cliffs of Dover, a neck like the tower of Babel, a mouth like the orifice of hell, ears like two frozen flames, hair like steel combs, eyes like pools of maggots, and a nose like a tortured needle. And he recollected Pandora's Box (any ice today, lady?). He called it that because it had a flapping and lockless lid, and in the bottom of which lay a swollen eye that seemed to have no eyeball.

The hangman smiled, scratched his oxter (new dish: oxter soup) and asked Jeff if in his Jeffhood (hangmen love to pun) he had a last wish. Jeff did, of course, so he asked for a moment of silence. The hangman supposed it was for prayer. But, no, it was to sing, and sing Jeff did. There on the gallows, the hangman's hands itching, the hangman's eyes bright with lust, a black hood over his pyramidal head, the noose already starting to choke him, wishing to urinate (or piss, if you please), his athlete's foot grinding, his nose full of snot, his piles in disrepair, Jeff sang the world he knew. He sang for his mother (write to mother), for his father (every son needs one) and for his pastor (lost sheep on the mountain).

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He sang and happiness came to him, for he sang his benevolent, beloved, beautiful, bobbing, brilliant, boneless and back-scratching sonnet.

> Let the apes in Arcady sing fah
> La la beside the Helicon. For birds
> And trees have sucked away the cleansing words
> That once told to all the world that raw
> Endeavor is the vice of fools. The flaw
> In all that will is that these flagrant herds
> Forget that forty is no end. When turds
> Are dropped in Eden, the peacock fouls his claw.
>
> The jackass brays beside the throbbing brakes.
> Sparrows brawl upon the walks where moss
> And flowers whisper out that love is dead.
> Old angels flitter past. Cold cod bleed
> Antiphons. Carp and catfish rise.
> As crows sing nude necrophiliacs.

The ecstasy shook Jeff to his Jeffhood. He shivered in his exaltate Jeffilate. In dulce Jeffilo. The hangman conceived the quivering to be a sign, a signal, an emblem, a metaphor, an unspoken message, as it were, and he laid his hands upon the lever of eternity, tightened his muscles, steeled himself for the coming quake of rope and tissue and threw the handle forward. Jeff plummeted. There arose a soft pop as if Sheba had unhooked her garter belt for Solomon. Time stopped. The hangman smiled. Jeff was dead. Through his mist and mellow fruitfulness he was hanged to the left in the unbending pantleg of time. No spasms. No mandrake progeny. He, Geoffrey Wolgamot, simply dropped and kicked, he, the slayer of undergraduates.

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ME AND THE WORLD

Walking the streets of the city, sitting in a bar,
Sometimes I take delight in the things I see;
Sometimes I hardly notice what things are:
They are the same—delight depends on me.

Today the tram's lurch and slide, footsteps,
The noise of birds are all clear and dear to me.
My hand at rest on the heavy, shining wood
Of the bar counter seems good, and the amber pint
And the floor and the faces and shapes of men
And sunlight falling there, and the taste of beer
And the feel of smoke in my lungs, and small things—
Shreds of tobacco and pieces of orange peel—
Are all lovely, and I see them clearly—
Perhaps that's all things need. I feel
My stump of pencil is worn down with poems
And I am being worn and shaped by the rubbing of life
As a shell is by the sea—as sensibly.

Outside the crippled houses respond
To the continual miracle of sun and dust.
Roofs, railings and the time of year
Walk beautifully together because they must,
And rare colours, blended by hard wear,
On cheap cottons of city children
Invite not pity but the satisfaction of love.
The rare ointment of formal praise
Is suddenly useful on such wedding days.

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Useful to me—these things can't hear my praise
And for other people today was like other days.
I have felt what we used to call God's Glory
As clearly as music or drink or a funny story.
Why did I feel it? Will it come back to me?
What was it that I saw in what I see?

—JAMES SIMMONS

W. STEVENS AT MY SWEDISH WEDDING

Not his body, bulkier in a tuxedo,
Nor he, awkwardly standing in a pew
And wondering with his Connecticut mind,
But the clown in articulate rhyme;
The comedian imagining, the man
Who disguised himself in curiosity.

He would enjoy the signs of sacred mime
Though spurned, gored by Swedish words,
Det Svenska ordet, that stride in the ear
Then after shaking hands and ogling
The eyes of my gorgeous bride,
He could fly back to Hosanna.

—ROSS SHIDELER

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pity, when I beheld a poster that mercifully banished those dark humors and set me off on quite another tangent. "Win a fabulous week for two at the Stardust in Las Vegas plus $2500. in cash!" it trumpeted. "Play Eagle Pencil Company's Quality Control Game!" I never ascertained whether I was to watch for some magic serial number or to hawk the pencils from door to door. In the next breath, I was ejected to the platform, and there superimposed itself on my mind a memory of this selfsame Stardust, fabulous indeed, as I saw it during a short enforced visit to Las Vegas a year ago.

My trip to the gambling Mecca was no Kismet-like step-over between it planes; I flew there from Rome on a matchless seven-thousand-mile journey, to keep faith as an actor, [redacted], and I undertook the journey with the direst misgivings. The circumstances were fraught as follows. Several months before, an Italian film producer had engaged me to devise a vehicle for a mobocrat [redacted] whom it might be prudent to call Tony Pantaleone. The latter, [redacted] his cowboy and personal appearance had recently [redacted] enormous success in the United States and Europe; his presence in a picture, it was universally felt, would make it a bonanza; and Sam Bogart, from the moment I began work in Rome, declared himself ready to go to any length to win Pantaleone's approval of our story. I soon found out what he meant. Shortly after finishing the treatment, which is to say the narrative outline of the scenario, a combination of Congreve, Pirandello, and Bernard Shaw, and I was summoned to Hollywood, hailed as a genius, urged to accompany the manuscript in person to Pantaleone, affirmed [redacted] adequately interpret its gusto and sparkle, its rippling mirth and delicious nuances.* My expostulations, my protests that I was anathema to performers, went for naught; in a supplication that would have reduced Ralph Bunche to tears, Bogart entreated me, for the sake of the team if not my own future, to comply. Seven hours later, I [redacted] the Ciampino West Airdrome.

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* (And nobody else in the [redacted] organization spoke even rudimentary English, he might well have added.)

A manuscript page from S. J. Perelman's "Revulsion in the Desert" (from The Rising Gorge).

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Al Hirschfeld

THE ART OF FICTION XXXI

S. J. PERELMAN

An Interview

S. J. Perelman was born February 1, 1904, in Brooklyn. He attended Brown University, where he was a contemporary of Nathanael West, whose sister, Laurel, he later married. In 1934 he started writing for The New Yorker and has been closely associated with that magazine ever since.

In addition to his voluminous output of short pieces, Mr. Perelman has worked extensively in both the theater and films, having

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written several of the early Marx Brothers classics and Around the World in Eighty days. In 1943 he collaborated with Ogden Nash to produce the musical comedy One Touch of Venus. His play, The Beauty Part, opened in New York late in 1962.

He is generally considered, along with the late James Thurber, to be amoung the greatest humorists American literature has produced. He is the author of Dawn Ginsbergh's Revenge (1929), and his most recent published work, in book form, includes the following: Strictly from Hunger (1937), *Crazy Like a Fox* (1944), *Westward Ha!* (1948), *Listen to the Mocking Bird* (1949), *The Swiss Family Perelman* (1950), *The Ill-Tempered Clavichord* (1953), *The Road to Miltown* (1957), *The Most of S. J. Perelman* (1958), *The Rising Gorge* (1961).

He has an eighty-acre farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania (where the house is "shingled with second-hand wattles"), a Greenwich Village apartment, and a no-nonsense, one-room office, also in the Village. It was there that the interview took place. The office is furnished like a slightly luxuriant monk's cell: a few simple chairs, a desk, a cot. On the walls are a Stuart Davis water color and photographs of James Joyce, Somerset Maugham, and the late Gus Lobrano, a New Yorker *editor and close friend of the author. The only bizarre touch is David Niven's hat from* Around the World in Eighty Days, *mounted on a pedestal.*

Mr. Perelman, trim and well-tailored, is of medium build. His hair is gently receding, and graying at the temples. He wears old-fashioned steel-rimmed spectacles, bought in Paris many years ago. He is soft-spoken and reserved, sometimes chilling, and gives the impression that he does not suffer "nudniks" gladly. He cares about words in their proper places; in his speech each sentence emerges whole and well-balanced, and each generally contains one or two typically Perelmanesque words. He is impatient with obvious questions—those that he has been asked over and over again in hundreds of interviews—but lights up when talking about his days in Hollywood, or telling anecdotes about his friend Robert Benchley. As The Listener *put it, reporting on a television interview, "Mr. Perelman knew all the answers and gave such as he chose."*

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INTERVIEWER

We've always been intrigued that when your first book, *Dawn Ginsbergh's Revenge*, appeared in '29, there was no author's name on the title page. Why?

PERELMAN

Well, it was really an oversight of my own. I was so exalted at being collected for the first time that, correcting the galleys, I completely overlooked the fact that there was no author's name on the title page. Unless one happened to look at the spine of the book, there would be every implication that it was written by its publisher, Horace Liveright.

INTERVIEWER

Do you look back on your work with pleasure? How long is it since you've re-examined *Dawn Ginsbergh's Revenge?*

PERELMAN

I haven't actually looked on it for some time. As far as deriving any pleasure, it would be quite the reverse.

INTERVIEWER

Is that true of all your pieces?

PERELMAN

Well, there are a couple of them I consider verbal zircons if not gems. In *Raymond Chandler Speaking*, a recently-published collection of his letters, I ran across a very flattering reference he made to a parody of his work I had done, "Farewell, My Lovely Appetizer." So I reread a few pages of that to see whether the praise was merited. I prefer not to say whether I think so or not. Otherwise, let me assure you I don't sit in the chimney corner cackling over what I've written.

INTERVIEWER

Is that because of the effort you put into each piece?

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PERELMAN

Possibly. I very much doubt whether I work harder than any other writer, but this particular kind of sludge is droned over while working so that it becomes incantatory and quite sickening for me, at least, to reread.

INTERVIEWER

So much of it is pure art and skill, I should think one would say, "My God, how did I make that association, that connection?"

PERELMAN

I don't know whether I approve of the picture you suggest of me, lounging about admiring myself in a hand mirror.

INTERVIEWER

Well, in those rare instances when you reread something after a few years, do you get the feeling you should have done something else to a sentence, to a phrase?

PERELMAN

No, I generally feel astonished at whatever I put down in the first place. The effort of writing seems more arduous all the time. Unlike technicians who are supposed to become more proficient with practice. I find I've grown considerably less articulate.

INTERVIEWER

Is that because you are increasingly more selective?

PERELMAN

Could be. Also the variety of subjects is restricted the longer I stay at this dodge.

INTERVIEWER

Why?

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PERELMAN

Well, principally through sheer ennui on my part. I've sought material, for example, in the novels I read in my youth, the movies I saw, my Hollywood years, and in advertising. Ultimately, I began to regard these matters as boring. I always grieve for the poor souls who have to grind out a daily humorous column or a weekly piece—people like H. I. Phillips who are obligated to be comical on whatever topic. I remember Benchley did a column three times a week at one time and ran into deep trouble. It's just not possible, in my view.

INTERVIEWER

There were more of those columns back in the twenties and thirties when Don Marquis was working that way, and F.P.A.

PERELMAN

Well, Marquis fortunately had Archie, his cockroach, and the Old Soak. When you create character it's much easier, because you can keep that spinning. In Frank Adams's case let's not overlook the extensive help he got from contributors —Ira Gershwin, Sam Hoffenstein, Arthur Kober, Yip Harburg—a pretty respectable roster of names.

INTERVIEWER

In the introduction to *The Most of S. J. Perelman* Dorothy Parker referred to you as a "humorist writer." Do you think of yourself as a humorist writer?

PERELMAN

I may be doing Mrs. Parker an injustice, but I think the linotyper had one drink too many, and that "humorous" was what was intended. In my more pompous moments I like to think of myself as a writer rather than a humorist, but I suppose that's merely the vanity of advancing age.

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INTERVIEWER

Mrs. Parker has said that there aren't any humorists any more... except for Perelman. She went on to say, "There's no need for them. Perelman must be very lonely." Are there humorists? Is there a need for them, and are you lonely?

PERELMAN

Well, it must be thoroughly apparent how many more people wrote humor for the printed page in the twenties. The form seems to be passing, and there aren't many practitioners left. The only magazine nowadays that carries any humor worthy of the name, in my estimation, is *The New Yorker*. Thirty years ago, on the other hand, there were *Judge*, *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, *College Humor*, and one or two others. I think the explanation for the paucity of written humor is simply that very few fledgling writers deign to bother with it. If someone has a flair for comedy, he usually goes into television or what remains of motion pictures. There's far more loot in those fields, and while it's ignominious to be an anonymous gagman, perhaps, eleven hundred dollars a week can be very emollient to the ego. The life of the free-lance writer of humor is highly speculative and not to be recommended as a vocation. In the technical sense, the comic writer is a cat on a hot tin roof. His invitation to perform is liable to wear out at any moment; he must quickly and constantly amuse in a short span, and the first smothered yawn is a signal to get lost. The fiction writer, in contrast, has much more latitude. He's allowed to sideslip into exposition, to wander off into interminable byways and browse around endlessly in his characters' heads. The development of a comic idea has to be swift and economical; consequently, the pieces are shorter than conventional fiction and fetch a much smaller stipend.

INTERVIEWER

Is this the reason so few comic novels are written?

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PERELMAN

Well, the comic novel, I feel, is perhaps the most difficult form a writer can attempt. I can think of only three or four successful ones—*Cakes and Ale*, *Count Bruga*, and *Lucky Jim*. *Zuleika Dobson* is often held forth, but the sad fact is that it falls apart two-thirds of the way through, ending rather lamely with the mass suicide at Oxford.

INTERVIEWER

Would you call *The Ginger Man* a comic novel?

PERELMAN

Rather terrifying. I think it's funny in spots, but many people boggle at certain scabrous passages early in the book. In a way, it's pity the author should have retained them, because they add little and, on the whole, constrict the fun... The name of F. Anstey, rarely heard nowadays, deserves honorable mention when comic novels are discussed. He edited *Punch* in the late nineties and was also a very successful playwright. He worked for the most part in the realm of fantasy and turned out some very diverting stories—*Vice Versa*, *The Brass Bottle*, and specifically *The Tinted Venus*, which Ogden Nash and I used as the basis for a musical we wrote called *One Touch of Venus*.

INTERVIEWER

Was Anstey an influence on you? Would you talk a little about your admirations?

PERELMAN

I stole from the very best sources. I was, and still remain, a great admirer of George Ade, who flourished in this country between 1905 and 1915, and who wrote a good many fables in slang that enjoyed a vogue in my youth. I was also a devotee of Stephen Leacock and, of course, Ring Lardner, who at his best was the nonpareil; nobody in America has ever equalled him. One day, I hope, some bearded Ph. D. will get around—belatedly—to tracing the indebtedness of John

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O'Hara and a couple other of my colleagues to Lardner. In addition to Ade, Leacock, and Lardner, I was also an earnest student of Benchley, Donald Ogden Stewart, and Frank Sullivan—and we mustn't forget Mencken. At the time I was being forcefully educated, in the early twenties, Mencken and Nathan had a considerable impact, and many of us undergraduates modeled our prose styles on theirs.

INTERVIEWER

How would you describe the form you work in? You've called it "the sportive essay" in a previous interview.

PERELMAN

I classify myself as a writer of what the French call *feuilletons*—that is, a writer of little leaves. They're comic essays of a particular type.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any devices you use to get yourself going on them?

PERELMAN

No, I don't think so. Just anguish. Just sitting and staring at the typewriter and avoiding the issue as long as possible. Raymond Chandler and I discussed this once, and he admitted to the most bitter reluctance to commit anything to paper. He evolved the following scheme: he had a tape recorder into which he spoke the utmost nonsense—a stream of consciousness which was then transcribed by a secretary and which he then used as a basis for his first rough draft. Very laborious. He strongly advised me to do the same... in fact became so excited that he kept plying me with information for months about the machine that helped him.

INTERVIEWER

Hervey Allen, the author of *Anthony Adverse*, apparently had the voices of his ancestors to help him. All he had to do was lie on a bed, close his eyes, and they went to work for him.

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PERELMAN

I fully believe it, judging from my memory of his work.

INTERVIEWER

How many drafts of a story do you do?

PERELMAN

Thirty-seven. I once tried doing thirty-three, but something was lacking, a certain—how shall I say?—*je ne sais quoi*. On another occasion, I tried forty-two versions, but the final effect was too lapidary—you know what I mean, Jack? What the hell are you trying to extort—my trade secrets?

INTERVIEWER

... merely to get some clue to the way you work.

PERELMAN

With the grocer sitting on my shoulder. The only thing that matters is the end product, which must have *brio*—or, as you Italians put it, vivacity.

INTERVIEWER

Speaking of vivacity, you have been quoted as saying that the Walpurgisnacht scene in *Ulysses* is the greatest single comic achievement in the language.

PERELMAN

I was quoted accurately. And here's something else to quote. Joyce was probably one of the most careful writers who ever lived. I have been studying the work you mentioned for nigh on thirty-five years, and I still choke up with respect.

INTERVIEWER

Your writing—like Joyce's, in fact—presupposes a great deal of arcane knowledge on the part of your reader. There are references to cultural figures and styles long past, obsolete words, architectural oddities—reverberations that not everybody will catch. Do you agree that you're writing for a particularly cultured audience?

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PERELMAN

Well, I don't know if that grocer on my shoulder digs all the references, but other than him, I write pretty much for myself. If, at the close of business each evening, I myself can understand what I've written, I feel the day hasn't been totally wasted.

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps you would talk about the incongruity that turns up so often in your use of language.

PERELMAN

And then perhaps I would not. Writers who pontificate about their own use of language drive me right up the wall. I've discovered that this is an occupational disease of those ladies with three-barreled names one meets at the Authors' League, the P.E.N. Club, and so forth. In what spare time I have, I read the expert opinions of V. S. Pritchett and Edmund Wilson, who are to my mind the best-qualified authorities on the written English language. Vaporizing about one's own stylistic intricacies strikes me as being visceral, and, to be blunt, inexcusable.

INTERVIEWER

In your own writing, when you're at work, thinking hard, and a particularly felicitous expression or phrase comes to mind, do you laugh?

PERELMAN

When I was young I used to literally roll over and over on the floor with delight, marveling at the intricacy of the mind that had wrought such gems. I've become much less supple in late middle age.

INTERVIEWER

It's often said—or taught, anyway—that what seems at first blush funny is usually not. Would that be a good maxim in writing humor?

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PERELMAN

In writing anything, sweetie. The old apothegm that easy writing makes hard reading is as succinct as ever. I used to know several eminent writers who were given to boasting of the speed with which they created. It's not a lovable attribute, to put it mildly, and I'm afraid our acquaintanceship has languished.

INTERVIEWER

The country's comics can't write a book or even a piece of any value at all. Why is that?

PERELMAN

You're confusing comedians—that is to say, performers—with writers. The two have entirely different orientations. How many writers do you know who can run around a musical-comedy stage like Groucho Marx, or, for that matter, talk collectedly into a microphone? Only a genius like David Susskind can do everything.

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to ask about the frequent use of Yiddish references and expressions throughout your writing. Words like "nudnik" and "schlepp" and "tzimmas" come in frequently enough.

PERELMAN

Your pronunciation of "nudnik," by the way, is appalling. It's "nudnik," not "noodnik.' As to why I occasionally use the words you indicate, I like them for their invective content. There are nineteen words in Yiddish that convey gradations of disparagement from a mild, fluttery helplessness to a state of downright, irreconcilable brutishness. All of them can be usefully employed to pin-point the kind of individuals I write about.

INTERVIEWER

Almost all the humorous writers of your period have worked in Hollywood. How do you look back on the time you served there?

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PERELMAN

With revulsion. I worked there sporadically from 1931 to 1942, and I can say in all sincerity that I would have spent my time to better advantage on Tristan da Cunha.

INTERVIEWER

Does that include your association with the Marx Brothers, for whom you worked on *Monkey Business* and *Horsefeathers?*

PERELMAN

I've dealt exhaustively with this particular phase of my life: to such a degree, in fact, that the mere mention of Hollywood induces a condition in me like breakbone fever. It was a hideous and untenable place when I dwelt there, populated with few exceptions by Yahoos, and now that it has become the chief citadel of television, it's unspeakable. Could we seguy into some other subject?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, but before we do, might we stimulate your memory of any colleagues of yours—writers humorous or otherwise—who functioned in Hollywood during the time you spent there?

PERELMAN

Well, of course everyone imaginable worked there at one time or another, and the closest analogy I can draw to describe the place is that it strikingly resembled the Sargasso Sea—an immense, turgidly revolving whirlpool in which literary hulks encrusted with verdigris moldered until they sank. It was really quite startling, at those buffet dinners in Beverly Hills, to encounter some dramatist or short-story writer out of your boyhood, or some one-shot lady novelist who'd had a flash success, who was now grinding out screenplays about the Cisco Kid for Sol Wurtzel. I remember, one day on the back lot at M-G-M, that a pallid wraith of a man erupted from a row of ramshackle dressing rooms and embraced me as though we had encountered each other in the

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Empty Quarter of Arabia. He was a geezer I'd known twelve years before on *Judge* magazine, a fellow who ran some inconsequential column full of Prohibition jokes. When I asked him what he was doing, he replied that he had been writing a screenplay of "Edwin Drood" for the past two years. He confessed quite candidly that he hadn't been able as yet to devise a finish, which, of course, wasn't too surprising inasmuch as Charles Dickens couldn't do so either.

INTERVIEWER

Surely you must have drawn some comfort from the presence of writers like Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker, and Donald Ogden Stewart?

PERELMAN

It goes without saying, but since you've said it, I can only agree most emphatically. You happen to have mentioned a remarkable trio, all of them people who had no more connection with the screen-writing fraternity than if they'd been Martians. Benchley and Mrs. Parker differed from Stewart in the sense that neither of them ever made an accommodation with Hollywood. Stewart did; he was a highly paid screenwriter for many years, made a great deal of loot there, and managed to get it out. The last is quite a trick, because that fairy money they paid you had a way of evaporating as you headed east through the Cajon Pass. But whereas Stewart was a consecrated scenarist, Mrs. Parker and Benchley viewed Hollywood with utter accuracy, is my belief.

INTERVIEWER

Which was what?

PERELMAN

As a dreary industrial town controlled by hoodlums of enormous wealth, the ethical sense of a pack of jackals, and taste so degraded that it befouled everything it touched. I don't mean to sound like a boy Savonarola, but there were times, when I drove along the Sunset Strip and looked at

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those buildings, or when I watched the fashionable film colony arriving at some premiere at Grauman's Egyptian, that I fully expected God in his wrath to obliterate the whole shebang. It was—if you'll allow me to use a hopelessly inexpressive word—*dégoutant.*

INTERVIEWER

Feeling as you assert Mrs. Parker and Mr. Benchley did, and as you plainly did, how could you manage to remain there for even limited periods?

PERELMAN

We used to ask each other that with great frequency. The answer, of course, was geetus—gelt—scratch. We all badly needed the universal lubricant, we all had dependents and insurance policies and medical bills, and the characters who ran the celluloid factories were willing to lay it on the line. After all, it was no worse than playing the piano in a whorehouse.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel that Hollywood evolved any writers of consequence, men and women who did important and memorable work in the medium?

PERELMAN

Oh, certainly—Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, Robert Riskin, and one or two others—but actually, it was a director's medium rather than a writer's. Men like W. S. Van Dyke, Frank Capra, George Cukor, Mitchell Leisen, William Wyler, and John Huston were the real film-makers, just as their predecessors in the silent era had been. I always felt that the statement attributed to Irving Thalberg, the patron saint at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, beautifully summed up the situation: "The writer is a necessary evil." As a sometime employee of his, I consider that a misquotation. I suspect he said "weevil."

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INTERVIEWER

Haven't there been writers who originated in films and then went on to make a contribution on Broadway?

PERELMAN

Well, after scratching my woolly poll for half an hour, I can think of three—Dore Schary, Norman Krasna, and Leonard Spigelgass—but I believe I am in my legal rights in refusing to assess their contribution. We shall have to leave that to the verdict of history, and meanwhile permit me to soothe my agitated stomach with this Gelusil tablet.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever revisit Hollywood?

PERELMAN

Every few years, and never out of choice. The place has become pretty tawdry by now; there was a time, back in the early thirties, when all the stucco and the Georgian shop fronts were fresh, and, while the architecture was hair-raising, there was enough greenery to soften it. But they've let the place go down nowadays—Hollywood proper is cracked and crazed, the gilt's peeling, and the whole thing has a depressing bargain-basement air. Beverly Hills, except for a few streets, is a nightmare; the entrance to it, which used to be a field of poinsettias, now sports a bank that must be the single most horrendous structure in the world. Of course, I except the Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue.

INTERVIEWER

In short, then, you experience almost no feelings of nostalgia when you return to Southern California?

PERELMAN

Sir, you are a master of understatement.

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INTERVIEWER

Nathanael West lived in Hollywood, and wrote a remarkable book about it, *The Day of the Locust*. He was your brother-in-law. And you are his literary executor?

PERELMAN

Whatever that implies. In my case it takes the form of being the recipient of a lot of slush mail from ambitious people working toward a degree, usually a doctorate. The curious thing is that every single one of them nurses the delusion that he has discovered Nathanael West, and that with his thesis West will receive the recognition he's entitled to. It keeps the incinerator going full time.

INTERVIEWER

You knew F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood?

PERELMAN

Yes—in a period of his life that must have been one of his most trying. The anxieties and pressures of his private life, combined with the decline of his reputation, had nearly overwhelmed him, and he was seeking to re-establish himself as a writer for films. He didn't succeed, and I don't believe he ever would have. He was pathetically innocent about the kind of hypocrisy and the infighting one had to practice to exist in the industry.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever see Faulkner out there?

PERELMAN

Very infrequently. Sometimes, of a Sunday morning, he used to stroll by a house I occupied in Beverly Hills. I noticed him only because the sight of anybody walking in that environment stamped him as an eccentric, and indeed, it eventually got him into trouble. A prowl car picked him up and he had a rather sticky time of it. The police were convinced he was a finger man for some jewelry mob planning to knock over one of the fancy residences.

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INTERVIEWER

Your reluctance to discuss Hollywood is so manifest that we will change the venue to a more metropolitan one. *The New Yorker* is known as the most closely edited magazine of all time. What can you tell us of its interior structure?

PERELMAN

No more than you would have gleaned from Thurber's disquisitions on the subject. Personally, I thought that in *The Years with Ross* he made the paper and its staff sound prankish, like a bunch of schoolboys playing at journalism. But one must remember that Thurber's entire life was bound up in *The New Yorker* and that on occasion he was inclined to deify it. At a gathering one evening during the mid-thirties, when he was extolling its glories and parenthetically his major share in creating them, I mildly suggested that a sense of moderation was indicated and that it was merely another fifteen-cent magazine. Thurber sprang on me, and, had it not been for the intercession of several other contributors, unquestionably would have garrotted me.

INTERVIEWER

How often did Ross or *The New Yorker* come up with an idea or a suggestion for a piece?

PERELMAN

Not too often. Most of the suggestions I get originate in mysterious quarters. They drift in from kindly readers, or I spot something—

INTERVIEWER

There are kindly readers?

PERELMAN

There are, and I'm continually heartened by the fact that people take the time to forward a clipping or a circular they feel might inspire me.

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INTERVIEWER

Does it worry you, since you often pick very contemporary subjects to write about, that your work may become outdated?

PERELMAN

Sir, the answer to that is that I regard myself as a species of journalist, and that questions of imperishability are at best idle. At my most euphoric, I don't expect to outlast Mount Rushmore.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever considered a serious book?

PERELMAN

It may surprise you to hear me say—and I'll thank you not to confuse me with masters of the paradox like Oscar Wilde and G. K. Chesterton—that I regard my comic writing as serious. For the past thirty-four years, I have been approached almost hourly by damp people with foreheads like Rocky Ford melons who urge me to knock off my frivolous career and get started on that novel I'm burning to write. I have no earthly intention of doing any such thing. I don't believe in the importance of scale; to me the muralist is no more valid than the miniature painter. In this very large country, where size is all and where Thomas Wolfe outranks Robert Benchley, I am content to stitch away at my embroidery hoop. I think the form I work can have its own distinction, and I would like to surpass what I have done in it.

—William Cole
—George Plimpton

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CROWN SHOT

Being in Rome, hired to hang around
a dim little set,
we film extras are out of the sewers of all creation—
rats in bowler hats, formal swords and orders;
evidently in this Tower of London, this is a diplomatic
occasion.
I have an English-type face and am more gorgeous than the
others
I am a judge in wig and ermine.

After hours around these arches,
encircled by lights,
unlit,
after hours, days and cold ages...

ATTENTION

ACTION

enter the Clown, the round of jewels blaze
as he steps to meet us;
I give him the crown of England
he steals it.

And later, all is out of focus
my eye in a mist,
where am I in these mists of jewels, arches
golden caskets, wigs, judges and crown

for the camera, so it seems, was all for the clown.

—NORMAN PORTER

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MAN IS A WONDERFUL WOUNDABLE ANIMAL

by

Charles Haldeman

Oleo's is hopping. Fat Carlo is sweating away behind the bar, dipping and dripping in the ice-cream bins. He looks up for an instant as Stefan comes in – grins – and then re-applies himself. The Moped Gestapo, installed on the left, is demanding *Der Stürmer* from Emile, spastic fifty-year-old alumnus of Theresienstadt. But all he has left is *Die Abendpost*. A delegation of straw-hatted Bavarian tourists from a pullman bus has occupied the Polish corridor, and just beyond them a group of Italian and Swedish girls from the Translators' Institute are eating spaghetti and lining up sleeping accommodations with three boys from the English College, a prince with a Porsche and an American soldier named Tannenbaum. Fräulein Gerber just left for the evening performance of *The Concert at Sans-Souci* (her all-time favourite film) at the Studio-Lux.

Stefan hangs up his coat and sits down in a far corner, with his back to the mirror. Frau Riegel hustles by: he orders a hot chocolate, then pulls out his cigarettes, lights one and plants both elbows on the table. He has no idea why he came in:

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force of habit, most likely: he recognizes almost no one. 'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik' comes on in the juke-box. The Bavarians are laughing uproariously and shouting for more beer. Emile is screaming at the Gestapo in a high-pitched voice: the large American archaeologist with glasses at the next table is getting nervous. Stefan shuts out the noise and sets himself the mental exercise of determining how many times he has come to this place with Barbara. But all times except the last melt into one: wax effigies in all the chairs at once. For the first time since his return to Germany he has the sensation that *Germany* is where he really is. Medieval carnival, peaked roofs and tilting walls: snapshots of castles: polyphony: wallpapered plaster: *Konditoreien*. Somehow the walls of the town have not crumbled; suddenly the connection between the affective body of his memory and the ordinary haphazard figures of this place, this moment, is real. He touches his forehead: still a slight fever. Even Berlin (so distant already) and Loh (he speaks the name aloud, softly, exaggerating his lips, and shivers when his heart fails to react), yes *especially* Loh, belong to that interim world to which Immanuel brought him, and not to his remembered Germany, not to him. Now who belongs? – there is only movement, clatter, there are only these voices, this particular evening. The figures are real enough, solid enough in any case. Hypothetically. But he realizes that he is not taking them seriously, and for the first time reads his relaxed indifference as a warning: he is ready to *forgive* them, but for what? for being what they always have been? Were the absence and dissociation only *his*? If so, he has imagined his history; he thinks: no way to tell, not by examining myself. Rational refutation: if what happened did not happen to you, to whom did it happen and what *else* happened to you? He smiles at his own sophistry: he is still sick. Yes, he smiles at himself. Not at *them*.

His cocoa comes; he says 'Danke schön' and Frau Riegel moves on. Automatically he fishes in his pocket for change, lays sixty pfennigs on the table, sucks the blob of whipped cream from the top of the chocolate, wipes his mouth with the back of his land and lets the rest lie.

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Suddenly a gust of wind inflates the heavy drapes on the door. Two small hands appear in the rift and part them. Two children enter: first the very dark girl of about twelve to whom the hands belong, and then a boy of ten or so. They are immediately recognizable as Gypsies. Both are wearing outsized overcoats that reach to their ankles and are smiling an identical put-on smile. Frau Riegel heads for them with wild peasant eye, her hands fluttering with the anticipated pleasure of shooing them out. But Fat Carlo leans over the counter and bars her way with an ice-cream scoop. She folds her arms and bides her time.

The two children stand very quietly just inside the door until every eye in the place is on them. Then the girl steps forward and declares in a clear, ringing voice:

'We ...are ...acrobats!'

A few laughs. One or two people clap. Without a movement of her head, with her chin high, hesitating on the next, already-formulated words of her spiel, the girl glances sharply about the room, mustering. The crowd falls silent. Only the juke-box persists: Glenn Miller's 'Chattanooga Choo-choo'. The girl hoists her arm dramatically (the sleeve is huge): her hand is bent back stiffly. She licks her lips. Her hand flips down as if on a spring and points at one of the Bavarians:

'If the gentleman ...with the *beau*tiful hat (laughter) ...will be so kind ...as to assist us in our preparations ...the performance will begin!'

The gentleman with the *beau*tiful hat, more than a little drunk, is prodded to his feet by his friends, and stands meekly awaiting orders, numbed by all the eyes upon him. The girl takes a single step closer: he glances around nervously, stands hulking and weaving, then stares down at her. She waves her arm (all sleeve):

'These tables—back! One table must be cleared and put—*here*!'

The Bavarian jumps as if stung. The occupants of the deported tables are already evacuating. He lifts a table: a spoon slides to the floor. Carlo nudges Frau Riegel, who rushes over and starts gathering up empty bottles and dirty dishes. The

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girl dances back to where the boy is still standing, and the two of them remove their coats at once, revealing harlequin tights, brightly coloured but filthy and much-patched. They toss the coats over a chair at the Gestapo table (Emile has escaped) and advance to the centre of the room, where by now the required space has been cleared and the empty table set. The choo-choo has run down; more 'Nachtmusik'. The girl curtsies mechanically, the boy crosses his feet, spreads his arms and bows almost to the floor. The girl cocks her head, tilting her chin upward as she does. She bares her teeth in a ridiculous professional smile, and announces:

'Ladies and Gentlemen! Pay good attention! Tonight and tonight only ...you have the exceptional good fortune ...to be able to witness ...a sing-ular performance ... of acrobatic skills! My brother' (she extends a flat indicative palm: he shows his teeth) 'and I' (she drops her head down and snaps it back up smartly) 'will now execute for your enjoyment ... some of the most daring ... the most breathtaking ... the most incomparable ... feats known to man!'

Applause. She bows. Her brother bows. She snaps her fingers: the boy, deadly serious, takes a step, lays his hands on the edge of the table, throws his legs into the air, hesitates in a handstand, lets one foot at a time down on to the table, and then flips himself upright. Applause. The girl stretches out her hands, backs up a step or two, then trips towards the table, abruptly leaves the floor, turns a full flip in the air, and lands in a crouch beside her brother. She springs upright. More applause. They bow and hop down.

Since the two children entered Stefan has not taken his eyes off the girl. His immediate reaction was one of embarrassment and he turned away, only to find himself facing her in the mirror, which he had forgotten was behind him. And so he turned back towards her to watch. As it became clear that she was fully in command of the situation, that she was *going to stay*, he began to feel a strange sensation of correspondence, of identity, by which he is both intrigued and disturbed. Now, behind the smooth façade of her performance, behind the mean and underfed dead earnest of her body, behind the

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dictatorial manner and the practised confrontation, the manner that *works* because it is incapable of doubt—behind these he searches for something: a phantom, a warrant for his feeling, signs of a forgotten self. All he *sees* is a body, one that responds perfectly to a discipline that is not imposed by anything outside itself, by any onlooker, nor even by the requisites of the feat it is performing, but rather by some unidentifiable regard of itself (as well as he can make out) as *instrument*. This instrument extends itself unfailingly to include its environment; the more difficult the feat, the greater the ease with which it seems to perform—as if by the implicit consent of the spectators, though they themselves have unwittingly and willingly become the functions of its executions. Yet they are not being used; no, for a few minutes now (whose minutes?) they have experienced a genuine release from the burden of regarding, of determining. They have simply *responded*. And Stefan too has submitted to this flexible instrument, letting the thought of a personal meaning behind its mechanics dissolve within the pleasure of its presence.

There is no longer any applause: the bodies of the girl and boy join and disengage like the two sections of a Chinese puzzle. Everyone is suspended in a huge breath, deep and successful, that has risen and caught and now awaits the signal for its release. The small boy is trembling with application, his tights are drenched with perspiration, his teeth are clenched, blind to eyes. The girl does not seem to have tired at all. Her dark skin is dry. Only the whites of her eyes glisten, and her smile wears on, impersonal, artificial, impertinent: through it a steady hiss of commands, half-words, holds her brother on a line. He attends as she drops to a split on the table, twists her back leg around and comes to a sitting position on the edge, leans back, lifts her legs, plants her feet beneath her and worms her body slightly back. She extends her hands to the boy and snarls; he bristles and then hops forward, plants his hands on her knees, crabs together, and springs to a full handstand on them. Then, reversing the placement of his hands suddenly, he lets his feet fall one at a time into her uplifted hands. Her legs begin to rise: she wears the same fixed grin, the boy scowls

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with exertion. Her elbows come down on the table close to her sides, drawing his feet close together; simultaneously she heaves her legs into an upright stance: the boy releases her ankles and stands on her palms with outstretched arms. He bends his knees, she thrusts upwards and he flips off the table; instantly the girl slaps her hands down on the table, wrenches herself in one motion into a handstand, separates her legs until she is doing an exaggerated standing split, rocks slightly forward and then back, tilting in a kind of cartwheel to the floor beside her brother. The boy wipes his nose on his sleeve: he is bobbing with exhaustion. The girl bows, releasing him, releasing everyone: the performance is over.

Stefan sits quietly, still watching the girl, half hypnotized by her. She has spoken again: he did not hear what she said. Her brother has slipped his overcoat back on, and now, holding his pockets out (so that he resembles an absurdly tiny pregnant bear), he is taking a collection from the tables nearest the door. The girl has produced a tambourine from somewhere and is making her way to the back, nudging and encouraging, wearing the same rigid smile, counting each take with quick eyes, saying *Danke!* again and again with the same toneless voice, the same automatic tick of the tongue.

Stefan, seeing her close in on him, has a sudden urge to run. But he knows he cannot. Is there more to her than her manner? he wonders. Why did he feel the way he did when she first came in? Why should he have felt anything at all? There is probably nothing behind the surface of perfect discipline except a buried child, already atrophied, unreachable by any will, by any insight or response—a child (like himself?) so self-contained that if she should be touched would be entirely unreceptive, or who, even if affected, would have no use for the contact, a child far too wise and too hard to care. Stefan sits now, unable to move, heaping hypothetical scorn on her, doubt after doubt, inurement after inurement, humiliated by this crass projection of himself.

But when she comes to him, last of all, and his far corner is suddenly the only remaining pocket of silence and resistance, and everyone around him has paid and is already forgetting,

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reducing the moment of his release to a safe and meaningless residue of memory or anecdote; now, when she comes to him, last of all, thrusting her tambourine into his face, confident, appraising him with (it seems) the same bruised, implacable apathy, the same past-knowing armour, the same brash, impossible *motif* of smile and feral, unrelenting eyes; when she comes to him now, rattling her tambourine in his face imperiously, he suddenly knows what he must do, and takes courage and lifts his eyes to hers. She hesitates an instant, utterly impassive, then shakes the thing again impatiently, challenging, but ready to face him out.

But he is committed now, too; his hands relax, he feels a sweet wave of assurance rise in him, and he breaks into a broad grin. She stares back at him, not acknowledging him, until a light veil of strain wets her eyes. She resists blinking: the two red dots at the corners of her eyes begin to swell: slowly she lowers the tambourine. Her lips twitch once, twice, and then —oh! he gets her to smile, a real, thawing smile, an unbearable smile which he holds until it grows to a warmth that melts her face, and makes her only, and *still*, a girl of twelve. He reaches forth instinctively and takes her hands in his: the tambourine tinkles; her hands go limp, give in. He stands and leans over and kisses her on the forehead, she murmurs, pain? joy? he releases her, frightened, he is losing control of the rising emotion inside him, nameless, he will burst, he knows it: he will burst, he wants to cry out, he snatches his coat and runs blindly from the place, dizzy, quaking with the knowledge of impending life.

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DEER

Beyond the pond where dragonflies
Lie bedded down among the reeds
And bullfrogs clock the racing days
Of summer, deer outgrow the woods.

They nibble in the stubble wheat
And lick the saltblock I provide.
Calm as their shadows they permit
The light to linger on each hide.

A single wink once woke their fear
And shot them back to wilderness,
But now they answer stare for stare,
As if they owned what I possess.

Such brazenness survives the sun.
In bed I hear their footsteps stray
About the clearing near the barn.
By morning they have gone away.

—EDWARD KESSLER

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TWO AT ZÜRICH

by

Donald Petersen

The day was bright and warm. We went to swim
Up at the Dolder's big expensive pool.
That afternoon we saw a strange old woman
With two white kittens on a leash of ribbon.
She wore a black dress with a frilly bodice
That plunged to show the skin below her neckline
Reddened, obese with too much languishing.
You asked me whether she was Swiss or German.
German, I thought, but surely not a hausfrau.
We had seen her on the excursion boat at Stein.
Of course, you knew I didn't know the answer.
That's why you asked the question—just to see
If I would show annoyance, and I didn't.
The question being a ruse to draw me out,
You didn't have a right to know my mind.
I was fatigued. The water in the pool
Was over-warm. I plunged in once again
And didn't speak to you half an hour.
And you resented it, I know. You sat
Cross-legged on the lawn and turned your gaze
To children or the woman dressed in black,
As if to tell me that you didn't care.
The woman too had sat down on the grass,
Gazing with indirection out across
The pool, its edge, and all of its surroundings.

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Her look was half expectant, half defeated,
As though she had seen some figure in the distance
And now was at a loss to make it out.
And while she sat this way the two white kittens
Played in her black lace petticoats at will,
In lace and out of lace. She didn't stop them
Although they rolled and spat and traded blows.
I climbed out of the water and you asked
If I had seen the kittens in their play.
"What's to become of us?" I asked abruptly.
You sat a moment, motionless, your hands
Clasped round your knees, your eyes upon your toes.
Then in a sudden movement like a shiver
You shook your head just once for all reply.
I fell back in the grass and laid one hand
Across my eyes. I could recall the day
We went to look at Stein, the old stone village,
And you had put a red bow in your hair.
One of the village fools made fun of us.
He trailed and mimicked us till we had gone
Down the long street and darkness had come on
And that red bow was all that I could see...
The woman in black had gotten up to go,
Her kittens trailing, catching at her hems.
Who was she but a widow and a stepchild,
Cut loose to wander Europe all alone,
Barren, thick-fleshed, forgotten but still searching,
If only for a drowned man in a pool?
Why had we come up here to do our swimming,
Here on the height, when there's a lake below?
I couldn't think. Zürich was under shadow.
The sunlight dimmed upon the opposite height.
"I'm tired enough to sleep a hundred years,"
I said. And when I wakened, all was darkness.
"Joan, are you there?" I said. There was no answer.
And cursing to myself I trudged toward town.

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ON THE ECONOMY, COMFORT, WASHING, AND SERVANTS

chronicle

Thoughts on American Economy. I wash my own shirts and rub and rub, leaning over the wash-stand or the bathtub and dirt wont come off—an off-white, off-blue, off-tan line remains along the collar and the cuffs, and my back hurts and my shoulder blades hurt, and my time passes without writing or reading. I wonder whether it would not pay to give them to the laundryman whom I have no reason to trust because he must use bleachings: he can't pay for this kind of loving treatment given each individual shirt; he either burns them clean on premises or sends them out for miles and miles, through hundreds of traffic lights in a blue truck, to be treated like humans in the great nazi state, then sends them back to me, ironed out of existence, almost changed into monuments of marble or clay. Is that the way to treat free men: put them in uniform, the uniform of resignation to this kind of economy? And they still call it division of labor and pretend it is so divided only according to skill: they know best, in their limited field, and they limit it knowingly for the purpose of excellence alone. Oh no. And they mark them, like political prisoners again: they murder cotton as they murder silk, they tear the fabric to drive steel claws into it bearing the markings that will help the police find me if I should learn this lesson and treat other people's property as they treat mine, or if, driven to despair, I should relieve another human being of a life that for me has lost all meaning. No, oh no and once more no. If economy deals with human Goods, my shirts are too good to be treated that way, I am too good to be left all alone and told: stuff your mouth full with daily cotton (bread?) and shut up.

Total comfort. That is perhaps the worst labor-saving disease of our time. Running hot water and fine soaps, plus nylon, dacron, orlon

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and all the attendant court of drip-and-dries, have given every pretty woman a Macbeth complex. She comes home from work, takes off her dress and washes it. Then she takes off her stockings and washes them, and the same with her slip and whatever else she is wearing. Then she washes the floor, then the mop she has used to wash the floor, then the pail she has used to wash the mop, then the sink or the bathtub she has used for that purpose, then takes a bath, washes her body, then the bathtub again, and finally enters her kitchen where she washes the breakfast cups and prepares dinner, only to gather enough strength to wash her pots and pans, her dishes and her sink, and finally her dishcloth and her hands again. And before going to bed she will wash her face, her teeth, her feet, her hands, toothbrush and her washcloth again, not to mention washbasin and bathtub. Then she will wash her mind of the memory of washing, in a dream of old houses with no comfort, but with servants who specialize in washing, and whose song keeps you company while you specialize in comfort, condescension and gratitude.

This sounds frightfully un-marxian to the ears of the opponents of Marx, who have been so much influenced by his thinking, that they would never dare think of physical idleness as very noble and very specialized. In the anti-marxist countries we have come to the following absurdity: servants are ashamed of their work, and regard it with the same aristocratic prejudice as their oppressors did at the height of the age of exploitation. A self-respecting maid in the United States makes it a point to exhibit a total lack of competence in washing floors or dishes, in cooking, serving, polishing, sewing, mending, starching and ironing; and their employers, who would fire their own daughters from a secretarial job for sloppy typing or bad manners in answering the telephone, accept these daily insults to their taste and their habits, and pay exhorbitantly and gladly for them. And their own daughters, who would never stoop so low as to become the housemaids of some highly considerate old lady, will be proud to take orders in an office from the most vulgar bums in business, and to degrade themselves in that horrible thing called office work, in which the mind is never free to dream, while the work of a housemaid is not only the free-est in the world, but is good for the body and pleasant to the eye. What can be uglier than a typewriter or a switchboard, if not a filing cabinet and the face of a man dictating

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boring letters in such utterly illiterate languages as Businessese or Federalese? And what could be more pleasant to the eye than a clean kitchen or a pantry, not to mention the living rooms, the libraries, the bedrooms of rich people with good taste?

Any kitchen maid knows that there are people who prefer to wash dishes and people who prefer to wash floors. And any farmer knows that there are people who prefer to sell pears and people who prefer to sell cherries or melons, and some of these will also know how to sell carrots and spinach, while others will have nothing to do with vegetables of any kind. I knew a farmer who was born to sell fruit and who suffered a nervous breakdown because his master forced him to sell lettuce and cabbages. And no good cook will tolerate the nosy presence of the lady of the house in the kitchen. The sign one reads on streetcars: "Do not speak to the conductor" is an insult to the dignity of labor. One should speak to the conductor all the time, to prevent him from making you his partner in his desperate suicide. Let any bus driver turn his head toward his followers, and what will kill him is not the traffic outside, but the lack of all traffic inside: those stern, stupid faces of people who try so hard to keep the reasons for their bus trip from their neighbor, that they even forget who they are and what they want from life.

There was far more division of labor in the past than there is now. A writer is today his reader and his typist, a lady her housekeeper, washerwoman, cook and dishwasher. Why, if the makers of comfort are so specialized that one half inch beyond their skill begins their total idiocy, should the recipients and prospective enjoyers of such comfort have to know every specialty in every field and do everyone's job but his own? A writer should not have to be a typist, nor a housewife her own servant. And all the talk of comfort is a pious illusion. Comfort begins when you don't have to put the laundry into the washing machine, and operate it and then take the laundry out and hang it on a line. Even the icebox is a nuisance, because it does not pick the food from the table and place it under its cold heart. Machines are ugly, they don't talk to us, they know nothing and understand nothing, and besides, they take up space. Let them at least be considerate enough to do the work they are supposed to do without having to be spoon-fed like babies.

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ON AUTUMN IN THE CITY

Summer is when you have all the telephones, the radios, the frying pans, the showers of the neighborhood, in your room, and, long after these intruders are silent, all the mosquitoes and the butterflies you had attracted with your reading habits. (They keep looking for you in the dark so you may read again and give them pleasure.) But you are doomed by stronger enemies: the exhaust fumes of cars, the smell of air-conditioners, and the oxygen poisoned by the news or ionized by television sets.

That is summer for you. Autumn instead begins, produced unknowingly by you, when you wake up at four one morning *because* the air is clean, *because* you have no mosquitoes and butterflies, but something else, hanging out of the bed down there: two sudden feet which, born this instant, are cold. You close the window and hear, all through the backyards facing yours, other windows being closed at the very same moment, as if by secret understanding between those left behind, who spent the summer in New York. Then you go back to bed, cover your feet like traffic casualties, and you don't know what you have done.

You will only begin to realize it later, long after sunrise: you have inaugurated a new season, even if there was no official sign of this: no speeches, no silver scissors and no ribbons. With that window-pane down (and look how dirty it is), the secret society is finished and the members disperse without a trace of their identity: one of your closest neighbors and most powerful members, that fat woman (judging from her voice) who used to unfold like a sonorous flag upon the heavy courtyard air the soundtrack of her ills, a detailed list of the things she did not like about the world, in a deep alcoholic contralto with long coughing spells; that most active of society members who was always at home, who picked up the receiver after the second or third ring (it descended upon you from the top of your window frame) and who in June intended to go west for the summer, then in July to Europe for two months, then in August would have settled for Brattleboro, Vermont, and finally decided for a week-end in Damariscotta, Maine, (and you never believed her), you have lost her forever and you will never know whether she went to Maine or not. And if you meet her in the street or at Gristede's, you will never

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be able to tell her from the three-hundred ladies of her size, tone and postal zone number who have been out of town all summer.

Everybody has come back, even those like yourself who had never left town. The imaginary trip (even the wings of fantasy are now mechanized) will no longer be possible on the jets of conditioners, or on the heavier noise of ventilators which transformed the whole courtyard into the cabin of a ship on stormy days. Great silence in the courtyards, and the leaves, no longer like hot spinach, typical New York vegetation in summer, are now having their privacy and may die each in its own personal way: some in red, some in yellow, but others fall immediately, and to see them still green on the ground suggests the idea of suicide. Can leaves be affected by the news?

But everything is finished: even that television set with its back to the window, which released in your face all the acoustic refuse of metallicized voices, while those inside the aircooled room lapped the cream of the news, drama and commercials, that is also gone today. And so is your angry shouting "Turn it down!" which, because it was human and personal, seemed more of an intrusion to the neighbors, (and to you) than those noises, even though they were close to the supersonic ceiling (de-humanized voices perhaps are part of destiny, like pilots with the atomb bomb).

Not today. When all the noises stay outside, all equally discreet, knocking on windowpanes to be received, they seem like distant memories of last night's summer. Here, a mosquito is hiding in our electric clock. But it is not a mosquito: it is an airplane in the clear autumn sky. Here, in the ice-box hides the Madison Avenue bus. But perhaps it is the hammer demolishing that row of brown-stone houses which will soon be replaced by a thirty-story apartment building occupying the sky in the right upper corner of your window and giving you in exchange a vicarious half-hour of sunshine as refracted from the penthouse bedroom windows which encase for the price of $799 monthly plus maintenance a human specimen under the renting agent's microscope.

You go out of the house to have a glimpse of the new season. Also because your tiny apartment is too big since four o'clock a.m. Cold drafts have widened it: it would take you ten minutes to go from your desk to the kitchen (five feet eleven inches). And you not only have new-born feet that freeze, but also thighs, and shoulders, and a

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neck, and especially fingers that can't write in this cold. There is sunshine outside. What an incredible day! But this is simply spring restored—this is where we left off toward the end of April (or was it the beginning of June?) and lost our way.

Why did we have to do that? All we needed was to warm up a bit, we would have had a summer worthy of best mediterranean sites.

You cross Fifth Avenue, and enter the park: leaves are weak: they must have heard the news, and some have gone insane with color. It has not rained, and yet the ground is wet. There is almost more light in the shadow than in the sunny areas: There is a smell of mushrooms, and suddenly the shadows have an icy breath.

As one perspired yesterday in the shadow, so one freezes in sunshine today, and we conclude: better to come back later, when the earth may turn its pale face to the fire. You go back home, sit down, and it is only a remnant of pride that keeps you from throwing a blanket over your knees.

But later on, as the sun warms and loves the earth again, a fly awakens on the wall and you bombard it with the strongest insecticide on earth. What meager satisfaction, it is almost a shame to win so easily: last night you would have had to follow it through the whole room, today it dies at the first spray. But that unhealthy smell you hated yesterday brings you back memories of summer, is dear to you: it reminds you of yesterdays summer. You re-open the window; everyone else re-opens theirs too. The telephones ring again in your room and now you know: these are the birds of summer. The fat lady replies, oh, she replies, o, her dear alcoholic voice; she too has come back from the park. My dear, she says, summer is finished, I have taken refuge in this corner, this tiny triangle of sunlight which I avoided yesterday... I am wearing a sweater I have a blanket on my knees but my feet are still cold. I had to close the window at four because my feet were cold. My trip to Maine? Well, let me tell you what I have decided..." But at this point, perhaps for the last time this year that television set, and that Madison Avenue bus have won their fight against your peace. But you don't hate them any more: they, too, are the dear voices of last summer...

NICCOLO TUCCI

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TIROS II

From where I watched, the shiny satellite
Almost occluded summer Sirius.
I might have sworn they'd touch and set the night
Afire, transforming to a furious
Match. They did not. The new light went on by,
Like a silver zipper zipping up the sky.

This is how we will climb the stars, they say
And I perfectly agree. Some blinking
Bullet shot past the moon, shot past day
And night, will flounder on through the winking
System, a man aboard—not you or I,
Of course, but some young sir who likes to fly.

For all I know, there are animals, birds,
Bats, plants, and men out there; perhaps, far back,
A titanic spacefish, too huge for words,
Which gobbles up the worlds, a shape of black.
Its length is measurable in light-years:
It has five tails and thirteen pairs of ears.

And this is not some queer extreme we think
Of, idling, but iron fact. For space is real
And near and cold and black as India ink,
And frightening as falling down a well.
Those stubborn codes the stars are sending—why
Not assess some newer history?

—FRED CHAPPELL

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NARCISSUS CONSIDERS THE BAR MIRROR

The illusion of total competence traps
Drunks and other scientists trying
Any old bottle that catches their eye.
They know that glass is made to see through,
And never doubt the image that they kiss.

If you can break a thing, that thing is real,
And so the bottle crashes in the street
And you are real as well. Dismantle things
To see what makes them go to shards and pieces:
The noise of breaking bottles proves the world.

All the bottles are empty. Row on row,
The wind in their necks attempts a drinking tune,
Lumbering polka or still-watcher's lament
Up in the pines on top of Cinch Mountain
In an ocean of whiskey where everything rolls.

The face on the barroom bore ends up your own;
Dieu et mon droit might fit if a crown fit,
But don't paste it in your hat, or see
It in a thundermug or cuspidor—
When wisdom flows, it flows right out the door.

—JOHN TAYLOR

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CHRONICLES

John Mulligan *(Vincent van Gogh – The Big Picture)* lived four years in France, and parts of his Chronicle were published in translation in Les Temps Modernes. His articles have appeared in a number of U.S. publications. At present he is an editor in New York, working for *Cavalier*.

Niccolo Tucci *(Thoughts on the Economy)* is a regular contributor to The Paris Review. He has recently published a novel, *Before My Time*, (Jonathan Cape, London, Simon & Schuster, New York) which the *New York Times Book Review* described as "a major tour de force".

FICTION

Dante Troisi *(Diary of a Judge)* was born in 1920. His law studies were interrupted by the war, in which he fought and in which he was captured. He returned to Italy from prisoner-of-war camp in America to become a magistrate in Cassino, Southern Italy. His autobiographical novel of the same title was first printed in Italian in 1955 (Einaudi): this is the first time a sequence from it has appeared in English translation.

Dallas E. Wiebe was born in Newton, Kansas, in 1930. He is a graduate of Bethel College, Kansas, and has an M. A. and PhD. from the University of Michigan. He has been teaching at the University of Wisconsin for the last three years. His special interest is in poetry, which has been published in a number of periodicals. *Sonnet* is his first published story.

Charles Haldeman *(Man is a Wonderful, Woundable Animal)* was born in South Carolina in 1931; his father was German and his mother Scots-Irish. When his father died he was taken on a family visit to Germany, thereafter spent much time in Europe, including two year's studying in Heidelberg, before finally settling in Greece, where he now lives. The tale here printed is part of his novel, The Sun's Attendant, to be published soon by Jonathan Cape.

INTERVIEW

Julian Jebb *(Interview with Evelyn Waugh)*. Grandson of Hilaire Belloc. Edited *Granta* whilst at Cambridge. Travelled for two years in Germany and Italy. At present writing for *The Sunday Times*.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Vincent van Gogh *(Contents page drawing)*. Thanks are due to the Kroller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Holland, for permission to reproduce this little-known drawing (from the Nuenen period, ca. 1885).

Don Mulligan *(Drawings for Vincent van Gogh – The Big Picture)* is the author's brother, and prepared these drawings especially for The Paris Review. He lives in New York.

Jacques Le Marechal *(Cover)* is a French painter, draughtsman and gravurist whose techniques (like those of his contemporary, Ernst Fuchs) are derived from extended study of the old masters. Marechal, who lives in Paris, has had several exhibitions during the past decade and his finely-worked paintings have earned him much praise. The Paris Review will present a portfolio in a future issue.

ART PORTFOLIO

William Mitchell *(Interview with Ernst Fuchs)* is an American student of art and art history who has been working in Vienna. He will continue his studies at Yale.

POETRY

Donald Gardner *(St. Jerome)* was born in London in 1938. Studied at Merton College, Oxford, and has been spending the last two years working on Renaissance history in Italy. Knows all that there is to be known about 15th century Bologna. Now lives in London, where he is plotting a long sequence of poems on the character of the devil. *St. Jerome* is his first published poem.

Bernard Keith *(Green Sickness, In Lieu of an Alba, Essay on Meter)* has contributed translations from recent French poetry to *Chelsea* and the Bantam Books anthology, *Modern French Poetry*. This is his first appearance in The Paris Review. He is a printer and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Mathew Carney *(Worth)* is an American writer of Irish origin who settled in Paris shortly after the war (when he served in the U.S. Marines) and has been living and writing there since that time. He has published a collection of stories with Scribner's and is now nearing completion of a long novel.

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Alistair Elliot *(Thoughts by the Fire)* is a librarian at an English university in the provinces. The BBC has broadcast some of his poems and others have appeared in various magazines in England.

Philip Levine *(Passing Out* and *Who are you?)* makes his home in Fresno, California. A former resident of the University of Iowa Workshop, he has contributed poems during the past decade to many magazines, especially to The Paris Review.

James Camp *(Brief History of the Confederate Aristocracy, A Wintry Fever)* has edited and co-edited three little magazines (Burning Deck, Arbor, Olivet Quarterly) and received Rensselaer and Hopwood awards for his poetry. Five of his poems were printed in a recent pamphlet, *The Wolgamot Interstice*. He teaches at the College of Engineering in Newark, New Jersey.

Milton Kessler *(Route* 40 – *Ohio, U.S.A.)* published his first book of poems this Spring, *A Road Came Once* (Ohio State University Press) with a handsome frontispiece by Ben Shahn.

Richard O'Connell *(from Cries of Flesh and Stone)* is a previous contributor of poetry to The Paris Review and teaches at Temple University in Philadelphia. He has recently returned from a Fulbright year in Brazil.

James Lovett *(Venetian Elegy)* was last heard of in Istanbul, from which city the envelope containing his manuscript arrived. Attempts to locate him have proved unavailing and the Editors would be grateful for any news of Mr Lovett. This is his first appearance in The Paris Review.

Dunstan Thompson *(Images and Reflections)* attended Harvard and now lives in Norfolk, England. Author of two books of poems, a book of travels and a novel, Mr Thompson has lately finished a new novel, *The Empty Room*, and a new collection of poems, *The Way of Peace*.

Francis Boylan *(The Tramp)* was born in Ireland and educated at Saint Mary's College. Has published in England and Ireland. Having lived in Dublin and London will now live and learn in Sicily.

Norman Rosten *(St Germain des Près)* has written fiction, five books of poems (latest, *The Plane and the Shadow*) documentary films and a full-length screenplay, *View from a Bridge*, after the play by Arthur Miller. Folkways Records issued an LP recording earlier this year of Mr Rosten reading his poetry.

Ted Milton *(Sun, your grief is my grief)* young poet, English-born, Canadian nationality, is currently living and writing in London. This is his first appearance in The Paris Review.

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Suzanne La Marre *(Aphrodite)* is a young American writer living in Oregon. This is her first publication.

James Simmons *(Me and the world)* is a graduate of Leeds, where he edited the weekly *Poetry and Audience*. He lives in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. Mr Simmons has written broadside ballads and songs, some of which he has sung in cabarets and on television.

Ross Shideler *(W. Stevens at my Swedish Wedding)* graduated from San Francisco State College in 1958, left the Army in 1960 and spent a year at the Sorbonne and two years at the University of Stockholm, studying comparative literature. He is now engaged on a Ph.D. at Berkeley, California. He has previously published in The Christian Science Monitor and in Contact Magazine.

Fred Chappell *(Tiros II)* of Durham, North Carolina, is the author of a novel, *It is Time, Lord* (Atheneum, 1963). His poem *Tiros II* will also appear in *Under Twenty-Five*, an anthology by writers who have attended Duke University.

Edward Kessler *(Deer)* teaches at Rutgers. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The American Scholar*, and other magazines, and he has held a Bread Loaf fellowship in poetry.

Donald Petersen *(Two at Zürich)* appeared in The Paris Review 28 and has published widely in various magazines, including The Western Review. He has studied at the Writer's Workshop, Iowa.

Norman Porter *(Crown Shot)*, an Englishman who now lives in New York State. In 1956 he gave up his practice as a London barrister in order to write full-time, and lived for a period in Rome, where some of his writing was published in a collection of work by various hands. This is his first appearance in The Paris Review.

John Taylor *(Narcissus considers the bar mirror)*, a young American poet presently living in Houston, Texas. This is his first appearance in The Paris Review.

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future contributors to the Paris Review
will include

W. H. Auden & Jean Cocteau / interviews
de Wet & Tajiri / portfolios
Céline & Pinget / translations
Thom Gunn & Louis Simpson / poetry

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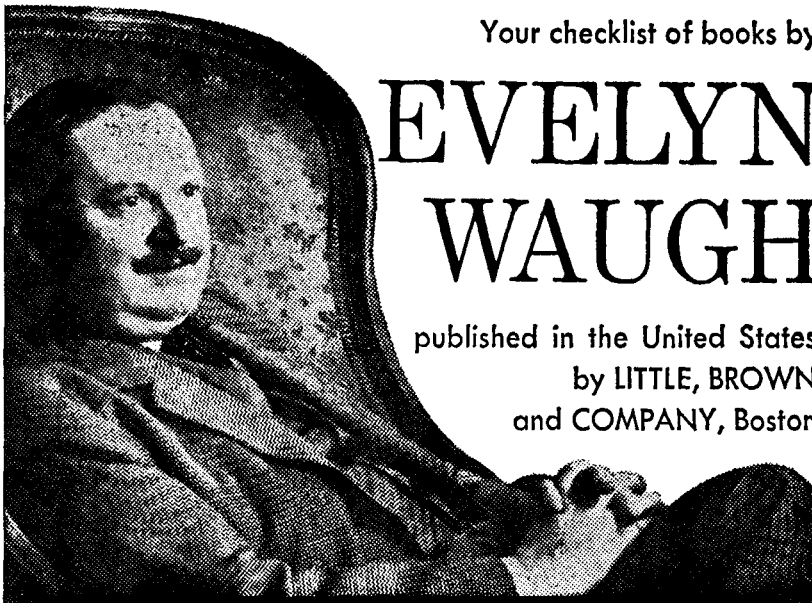

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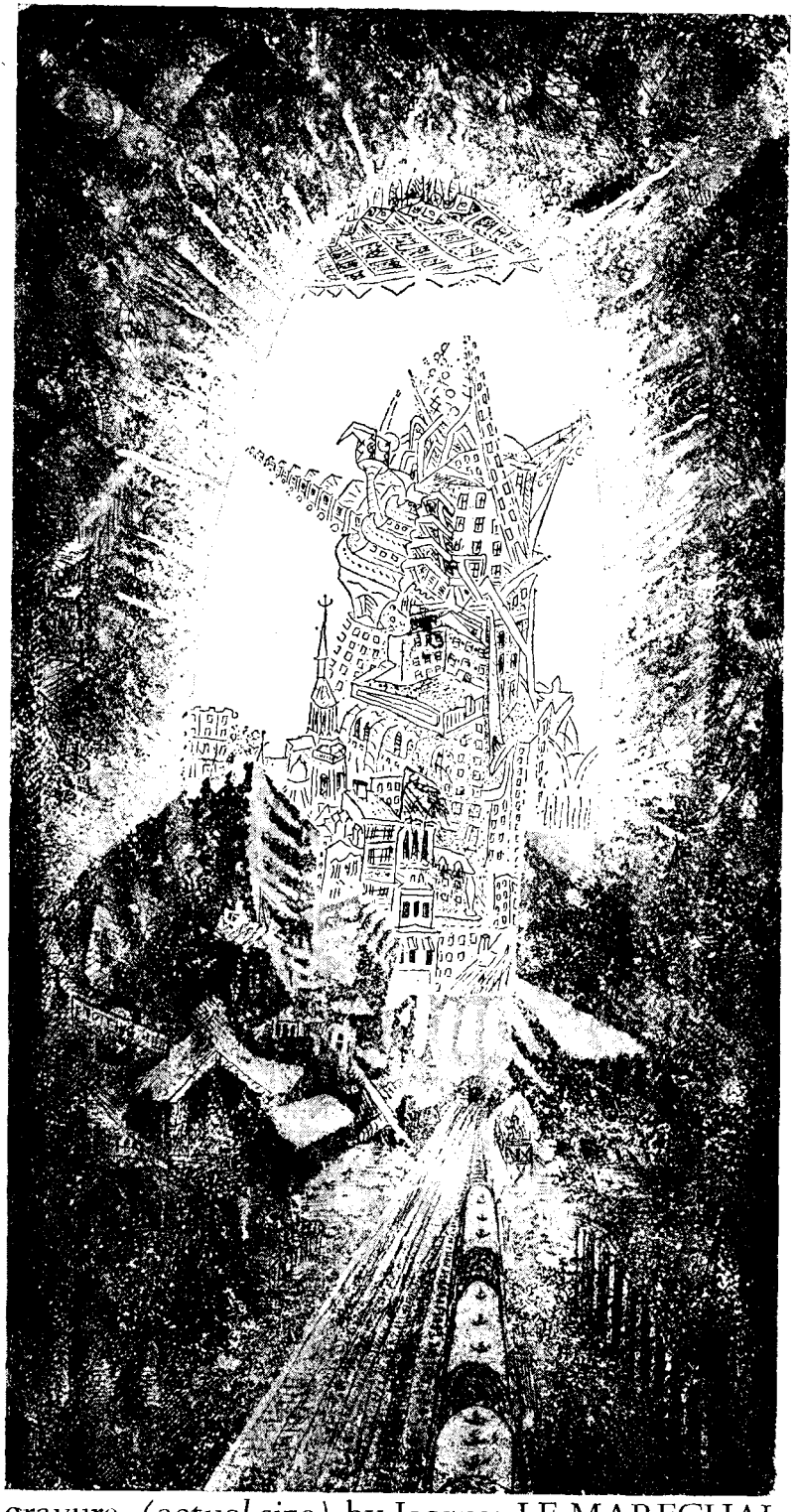

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la casa gialla alla stazione notting hill gate londra

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